



**European Committee
of the Regions**



Annual Activity Report for 2022

European Committee of the Regions

June 2023

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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 the Financial Regulation (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 2022.

Part 1 of the report is a brief summary of the political achievements of the institution in 2022.

Part 2 presents the main achievements and activities compared against the objectives set in the Strategic Management Plan 2022-2023.

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

Finally, Part 5 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 one third of public spending and two thirds of public investment. They also hold in many Member States competencies in key areas such as education, economic development and 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 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.

2022 was the third year of the CoR's seventh term of office 2020-2025, under the leadership of President Aposto-

los Tzitzikostas and First Vice-President Vasco Alves Cordeiro until June 2022 when Vasco Alves Cordeiro was elected President of the European Committee of the Regions and Apostolos Tzitzikostas became the First Vice-President.

In 2022 the CoR met five times in Plenary Session (1 remote due to COVID-19 measures). The 9th European Summits of Regions and Cities took place during the French Presidency of the Council in Marseille. The Summit was organised few days after Russia invaded Ukraine therefore the CoR adapted the agenda to the situation by organising a special session on solidarity with Ukraine. In September an external Bureau meeting took place in Prague in the framework of the Czech Presidency of the Council, which was attended by Vitaly Klitschko, Mayor of Kyiv and Chairman of the Association of Ukrainian Cities.

There are more than a million representatives elected at regional and local level in the EU – more than 3,000 eligible candidates for every position as Member of the CoR. 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 are 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 2022 and these were accompanied by 3 communication campaigns:



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 based on social, economic and territorial cohesion as fundamental values.

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 cooperation agreements with the European Commission and the European Parliament need to be updated and upgraded if possible, and the cooperation with the European Council and the Council of Ministers need to be strengthened.

9 flagship initiatives have been identified in 2020, which were followed up in 2021 and – with some adjustments – in 2022 to make the CoR more strategic and impactful in accordance with the political priorities, while also adapting to new developments:

- Recovery and resilience facility (RRF)
- Health and resilience
- The Action Plan for the Implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights
- CoR 4 Green Deal
- The future of cross-border cooperation
- The New Pact for Migration and Integration
- Conference on the Future of Europe
- Long-term vision for Rural Areas
- Strategic CoR's Budget – ensuring a fair share of the resources for the CoR

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.

2022 political achievements

In 2022, the following political achievements can be highlighted:

- Significantly extending the participation of local and regional representatives in the Conference on the Future of Europe from four to 30 representatives

and pushing in the conclusions for the acceptance of reform concerning the CoR, giving it an enhanced role in the EU's institutional architecture and the importance of active subsidiarity as a guiding principle for EU policy - and decision-making;

- Publishing the third edition of the [EU Annual Report on the State of Regions and Cities 2022](#) 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;
- Organising the Marseille Summit, which brought together 1 500 local and regional representatives to discuss key topics. A message was sent by the President of France Emmanuel Macron, who had attended the Plenary Session in December 2021, in the eve of the French Presidency of the Council. The adoption of the Marseille Manifesto paved the way for the Conference on the future of Europe (COFE) conclusions on increasing LRA's role at EU level;
- Adopting the Marseille Summit Declaration of EU's Regions and Cities on Solidarity with Ukraine just days after the Russian invasion and spearheading the declaration by European Alliance of Cities and Regions for the reconstruction of Ukraine to the International Expert Conference on the Recovery, Reconstruction and Modernisation of Ukraine in Berlin later on in October.
- Granting the Mayor Pawel Adamowicz Award for the first time, to Henriette Reker, Lord-Mayor of Cologne.
- Increasing outreach to the one million elected regional and local representatives by developing the «CoR Regional and Local EU Councillors' Initiative» (more than 2,000 EU Councillors by the end of 2022) and finding synergies with the European Commission's pilot-project on «Building Europe with Local Councillors»;
- The European Commission followed CoR's suggestions to extend the 100% EU co-financing rate for 2014-2020 cohesion policy funding under the CARE programme to the 2021-2022 accounting year. Rural Proofing is part of the European Commission's internal guidelines for impact assessment of new legislative proposals.
- The CoR is now part of the European Commission working group shaping the governance of the Rural Pact.
- The European Parliament's report on the implementation of the Resilience and Recovery Fund takes on board the CoR's call to better involve local and regional authorities in the preparation of national recovery and resilience plans.
- The 20th edition of the EU Week of Regions and cities involved 20,000 participants overall, confirming itself as the largest event dedicated to cohesion themes across the EU. It provided an impactful platform to renew the commitment of the over 12,000 partners of the Cohesion Alliance.
- Throughout 2022 the CoR's Plenary Sessions included debates on the Conference on the Future of Europe, the Green Deal and in the context of the European Year of Youth 2022. The Plenary Sessions and the Marseille Summit were attended by high-level speakers from the European Commission, European Parliament, international organisations and also

guest mayors from Ukraine. In 2022, in the context of the Presidencies of the Council, the CoR Summit in Marseille was addressed by Clément Beaune, French Secretary of State for European Affairs, and the Bureau meeting in October by Ivan Bartoš, Deputy Prime Minister for Digitalisation and Minister for Regional Development of the Czech Republic .

- The CoR has published the first [Green Deal Going Local Handbook](#) with a focus on climate adaptation. The Handbook is an interactive toolkit that provides information on financial aid and technical instruments to deploy climate adaptation measures based on different geographical areas and regional specificities.
- At the latest COP27 in 2022, building on the recognition in the Glasgow Climate Pact of the “urgent need for multilevel and cooperative action”, the CoR included a paragraph in the EU Conclusions highlighting the role of LRAs in fighting and adapting to climate change.
- At the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP15) of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, in Montreal, state representatives adopted on 19 December the Kunming-Montreal global biodiversity framework, which recognises the importance of subnational, municipal and other local authorities in efforts to enhance its implementation, with the European Committee of the Regions as a key partner.

A new era of cooperation

The European Alliance of Cities and Regions for the Reconstruction of Ukraine, launched by the CoR, intends to play a consultative role in the European Commission’s Ukraine Reconstruction Platform (“Donors Coordination Platform”). Efforts to build networks and to offer the CoR as a platform for exchange and mutual support were deemed particularly fruitful. In addition, due to active dialogue with the organisers of the Ukraine Recovery Conference in Lugano on 5-6 July, the [outcome document](#) includes an explicit reference to the importance of the local level. Working contacts were set for future cooperation on the recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine.

Cities, municipalities and regions all over the EU, in coordination with associations, and in collaboration with the CoR, organised 15 summer camps in 12 European cities and regions, welcoming 1000 Ukrainian children.

The new [Cohesion Alliance](#) was launched in October 2022 to provide a new momentum to strengthen Cohesion policy as part of the debate on the future of the policy. The six main territorial associations and co-founders of the Cohesion Alliance reaffirmed their commitment to reinforce cohesion policy as the main EU investment policy and to promote the visibility of investments supported by Cohesion Policy funds.

The Automotive Regions Alliance, launched in the June 2022 Plenary Session of the CoR, is a political network of regions committed to the successful transition of the European automotive and supply industry aimed at bring-

ing together regions with a strong automotive and supply sector that want to play an active role in decarbonising the transport sector and to contribute to the objectives of the European Green Deal, while strengthening regional industrial ecosystems and value creation. The CoR’s «Automotive Regions Alliance» is legally mentioned in revised Regulation on CO2 emission standards for cars and vans, whereby the European Commission must consult the CoR when identifying financial needs to guarantee a just transition.

The CoR led the work on the «[EU Charter on Youth and Democracy](#)», together with young people and youth organisations, which represents one of the key CoR actions on both the recommendations from the Conference on the Future of Europe relating to the democratic participation of young people and youth organisations in social, political and civic life and the European Year of Youth (EYY). In the interinstitutional setting and with its members, the CoR contributed to the reflection on future youth policy and youth mainstreaming, in line with the objectives of the EYY, promoting the exchange of good practices and discussion with CoR members and YEPs on the needs and situation of young people and how to better engage them in order to build a more inclusive, sustainable and just Europe.

On 17 February, the CoR launched the Trees for Life initiative, a call to action for all CoR members – but also cities and regions across the EU – to share their ongoing projects and new commitments in reforestation and the greening of urban areas. Trees for Life is part of the CoR’s Green Deal Going Local campaign. The call to action encouraged every participant to plant a tree in their region, city or village and to share a photo to publicise each commitment and promote it as a contribution to Europe’s reforestation. Cities and regions contributions under Trees for Life count directly towards the European Commission 3 Billion Additional Trees Pledge and contribute to the new EU forest strategy for 2030.

On 25 March, the CoR launched the EU Organic Awards. The awards are jointly organised by the European Committee of the Regions, the European Commission, the European Economic and Social Committee, COPA-COGECA and IFOAM Organics Europe. They consist of seven categories and eight prizes and aim to promote different actors throughout the organic value chain who have developed an excellent, innovative, sustainable and inspiring project, producing real added value for organic production and consumption.

A more detailed account of achievements is provided in the Annual Impact Report 2022¹.

2022 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 2022 was the third year of the CoR’s seventh mandate, with three political priorities set. The «Going for

¹ [Summary and full report](#)

Impact!» plan, which the Secretary-General launched at the start of his mandate was continued in 2022 and referred in the Annual Impact Report 2022. 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

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 2022, the Secretary-General organised an EuSA Online talk on implementing the Going for Impact! plan with focusing on three areas of advancements undertaken by the CoR since 2020, namely:

1. Modernising the CoR administration.
2. Greening the CoR.
3. Local democracy.

Additionally, two staff seminars were scheduled on Cluster II and III when staff members reported on the achieved actions. 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 3 years.

In the context of the «Going for Impact!» programme, 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 and the second Task Force Project day for all staff took place on 13 January 2022.

The initial 9 Task Forces were reviewed and 6 continued to work in 2022 (4 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**
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 2022.

COVID-19 pandemic: business continuity and beyond

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, which coincided with the start of the new mandate, was also present in 2022, but in a continuously decreasing form and this has continued to influence the way of working. As the pandemic weakened, the institution also adapted to the situation. Until mid-February statutory meetings were remote, between mid-February and end of April they were organised in hybrid form and from May they were held in-person.

Building on a robust IT environment and on the experience from the previous years, moreover thanks to the flexibility,

creativity and commitment of staff in all CoR departments, the institution continued to ensure business continuity in a satisfactory manner in all areas of activity in 2022.

Telework was already before the pandemic a widely used working tool, but the necessary IT equipment, experience and teleworking culture were not yet present throughout the CoR. Telework has developed remarkably during the years and has resulted in a seamless work. IT services deployed significant efforts to acquire, configure and deliver the relevant material to allow the whole institution to operate hybrid or remotely. Taking into account the experience gained during the lockdown, the pilot project on telework was launched on 1st April 2022, and will be evaluated in 2023.

Notwithstanding the very demanding circumstances, the collective efforts of all involved enabled the Secretariat-General to ensure continued support to the political ac-

tivities of the Committee. Whilst putting health and safety of Members and staff first, the organisation adapted to the continuously evolving situation. Statutory and non-statutory meetings as well as other core activities were pursued during the different phases of the pandemic, thus enabling the Committee to play its role in the European decision-making process without interruption and to support the other EU institutions and the local and regional authorities in the handling of the crisis situation at hand.

In the following parts of this report, the main achievements and activities are compared against the objectives set in the Strategic Management Plan 2022-2023, 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 2022.

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT PLAN PER CORE BUSINESS FUNCTION

This chapter presents the implementation of the Strategic Management Plan per service.

The table below shows the staff of the European Committee of the Regions as of 31 December 2022.

Type	AD	AST	AST/SC	Total
Establishment plan	306	178	12	496
Contract staff (1)	18	32	0	50
External contract staff	n/a	n/a	n/a	49
Secoded national experts	13			13
Other personnel (specify) (2)	1			1
Total	338	210	12	609

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

Glossary of frequently used terms and icons



Political priority for 2022-2023: Bringing Europe closer to its people: strengthening EU democracy and working together on the future of our Union



Political priority for 2022-2023: 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 2022-2023: 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 2022-2023: Focused Policy support.



Administrative priority for 2022-2023: Increased Outreach.



Administrative priority for 2022-2023: Smart & modern administration.

AOD:	Authorising Officer by Delegation
ARLEM:	Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly
CALRE:	Conference of the Regional Legislative Assemblies of the EU
CCC:	Conference of Committee Chairs
CFAA:	Committee for Financial and Administrative Affairs
CIVEX:	Commission for Citizenship, Governance, Institutional Affairs and External Relations
COFE:	Conference on the Future of Europe
CoP:	Conference of the Presidents
CoR:	Committee of the Regions
CORLEAP:	Conference for local and regional authorities for the Eastern Partnership
DB:	Draft Budget
ENVE:	Commission for the Environment, Climate Change and Energy
E-PRIOR:	IT tool to send invoices and credit notes
EPRS:	European Parliamentary Research Service
e-ram/e-AM:	tool for electronic amendments
ESPAS:	European Strategy and Policy Analysis System
EuSA:	European School of Administration
IMP:	Unit Imprimerie/Diffusion LRA: Local and Regional Authorities
LRA:	Local and Regional Authorities
MEP:	Member of the European Parliament
NAT:	Commission for Natural Resources
OSS:	One Stop Shop
RoP:	Rules of Procedure
RRF:	Recovery and Resilience Facility
SEDEC:	Commission for Social Policy, Education, Employment, Research and Culture
YEP:	Young Elected Politicians

2.1 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 2022 included the publication of more content (articles, speeches, videos) about the CoR and news or press releases on the political groups' respective websites. Additionally, there was an increased activity and presence on social media as well as a higher engagement of users on the websites. Additionally, there was increased visibility through an active presence on social media channels.

Overall impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Political groups were still impacted by the pandemic in 2022, with it easing in the second half of the year. Working

methods were implemented and their respective agendas were constantly adapted to the evolving situation. A more digitalized working environment has been developed. For the few face-to-face meetings, participants really appreci-

ated the in-person interaction. Overall, all political groups were faced with new challenges but managed to learn from this situation and adapted to different working ways to ensure the continuity of their operations.

2.2 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 financial and administrative support to CoR members and bodies for accomplishing their political mission and activities at the CoR.	A	14
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 for CoR's political and legislative work and develop CoR's capacity and activities on foresight and coordinate the inter-institutional relations as well as the relations with the European and national associations of LRAs.	A	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	19
Objective 5: Cooperate with the EU Institutions when deciding on EU programmes and policies.	B & C	20
CBF 3: Organise platforms, networks, fora and partnerships with regions, cities, municipalities and their representative organisations.		
Objective 6: Implement EU policies and programmes at local and regional level and Act as Ambassador of Europe in the municipalities, cities and regions.	B & C	23
CBF 4: Foster sub-national politicians' dialogue with the citizens on Europe's achievements and challenges and ensure contact with media.		
Objective 7: Focus CoR communication on three campaigns.	D	24
Objective 8: Increased outreach of the CoR's consultative works through targeted communication.	D	25
CBF 5: Organise dialogue with regional and local authorities in candidate countries and neighbouring partner countries.		
Objective 4: Provide Political recommendations for EU policies and programmes and collaborate in the design of EU policies.	B & C	26

Objective 5: Cooperate with the EU Institutions when deciding on EU programmes and policies. B & C 26

Objective 6: Implement EU policies and programmes at local and regional level and Act as Ambassador of Europe in the municipalities, cities and regions. B & C 26

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

Objective 9: CoR in the digital post-COVID-19 world. D 27

Objective 10: Ensure appropriate budget allocation, uphold sound and regular management of financial resources and monitor a cost-effective internal control environment in the institution. E 28

Objective 11: 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 30

Objective 12: 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 31

Objective 13: Provide AOD with opinion and related recommendations on adequacy of Risk Management, control and governance processes in the framework of his declarations for 2021-2022 and for the preparation of the 2023 declaration, with references to the areas already audited. IAS 33

Objective 14: Provide efficient legal support to CoR members and bodies. LS 34

Objective 15: Representing the CoR's interests in the context of legal proceedings. LS 35

Objective 16: 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 resources. IIT 36

Objective 17: Implementing the building strategy. Prepare for the exchange of B68/TR74 buildings with VMA building and related refurbishment works. L 37

Objective 18: Setting an ambitious and credible target for the reduction of CO2 emissions. L 38

Objective 19: To further deepen and develop the sustainable multilingualism policy for both Committees, in accordance with the Cooperation Agreement. T 39

Objective 20: To consolidate relations with DT stakeholders and improve integration of translation in the legislative work of the Committee. T 39

Objective 21: To create synergies in the framework of interinstitutional cooperation in the field of translation. T 40

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 financial and administrative support to CoR members and bodies for accomplishing their political mission and activities at the CoR.

Directorate A for Members, Plenaries and Strategy

Political/Administrative priorities supported:



Indicator	Target for 2022	Last results from 2022
Consistent quality of the Conference of Presidents, Bureau, Plenary Sessions agendas and meetings.	<p>Review planning of Bureau meetings and plenary sessions to reduce last-minute changes.</p> <p>Best technical services (sound, web-streaming, etc.) within the allocated budget.</p> <p>Improvement of technical facilities for the organisation of hybrid meetings.</p>	<p>Achieved:</p> <p>Increased number of high-level debates during plenary sessions due to maximizing the time allotted to debates by setting voting slots.</p> <p>Improved structure of meeting agendas implemented.</p> <p>More visual content is displayed during plenary sessions.</p> <p>Web-streaming ensured for all plenary sessions and commission meetings.</p> <p>Successful inclusion of last minutes changes in the organisation of the Plenaries (last minutes guests and required interpretation services).</p> <p>Acquisition of new modules for remote participation platforms for hybrid meetings or remote interventions.</p> <p>Reduced number of documents published after deadline (e.g. only 3 out of 29 for the October plenary session).</p> <p>Remote electronic voting successfully ensured, as required, in the first months of 2022.</p>
New CoR language policy adopted.	Language policy adopted by the CoR Bureau in the 1st semester 2022.	<p>Achieved:</p> <p>Decision by Bureau on 26 April 2022.</p>

Number of visits by the members on the OSS website (measurable via a heat map).	To establish an access via the Members Portal of a member oriented page of the OSS and to make the existing page of the OSS on the intranet more CoR staff oriented (2022).	<p>Partially Achieved:</p> <p>30% less page visits by members were registered, which can be explained by less meetings due to the pandemic situation (first months) and by the deployment of the Multi-Factor Authentication (last months).</p> <p>As a consequence, the OSS webpage will be relocated from a MFA-protected environment of MyCoR to the public CoR web-domain (the target has been reviewed).</p> <p>Work to restructure the current on MyCoR - OSS page started, to meet its new purpose and its new audience.</p>
The existing legal framework applicable to the organisation of CoR activities and the reimbursement of expenses and payment updated and consolidated.	Adoption of the new legal framework by CFAA and Bureau foreseen for Q1-Q2 2022.	<p>Partially Achieved:</p> <p>New administrative working group established in May 2022. Work in progress with reporting to CFAA.</p>
The complete archives of the Committee allowing direct and easy access for the members, various bodies and interested citizens made available online.	Implement the final adjustments before the opening of the online archives. Inform the online opening among potential interested groups.	<p>Achieved:</p> <p>Electronic platform for the the Open Archives developed.</p> <p>Communication activities addressed to users are planned.</p>
Level of access by members and staff to tailored subscriptions with dedicated online support to access resources remotely.	More than 1/4 of CoR members (including alternates) directly connected to at least one CoR electronic subscription. All CoR staff and joint services with direct access to, at least, 2 premium online subscriptions, according to their needs.	<p>Achieved:</p> <p>In 2022 the Documentation Centre provided to CoR members and staff an offer to access the following online resources: The Financial Times, The New York Times, The Economist, EU Observer, Politico Pro, Le Monde, with PressReader, Contexte, Agence Europe available to all members and staff.</p>
Percentage of opinions for which bibliographical research/guidance and tailored information is provided	25% - 30% of CoR's opinions Milestone1: Include the Bibliographical guidance step in the Cycle of opinions at an early stage. Optimize the deployment of our research platform Lib Guides.	<p>Achieved:</p> <p>Bibliographical research conducted for all the opinions adopted in 2022 (100%). The research results were made available to the CoR members and staff through the creation of dedicated guides before every Plenary session.</p> <p>LibGuides has become the reference research and newsletter platform (CoR News Harvest).</p>

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

Directorate A for Members, Plenaries and Strategy

Political/Administrative priorities supported:



Indicator	Target for 2022	Last results from 2022
Technical upgrade of conference rooms	Definition of requirements, evaluation and choice of the new interpretation system for all conference rooms (backends, consoles, microphones, etc.).	Partially Achieved: A New Joint Multiannual Renovation Plan 2022-2027 was signed in 2022 by the CoR and the EESC. 200,000 EUR allocated budget by the CoR in 2022.
Number of electronic workflows simplifying and consolidating the processes ensuring same function takes care of the same type of validation.	Develop a «correspondence» between the political tree view of bodies and budgetary tree view of meetings. Develop electronic workflows for logistic services and run them along the existing ones. Public register for Dec 18/2020's Appendix documents.	Priority reviewed: IT development in progress for additional simplified workflow.
Electronic financial monitoring tool finding its origin in the extended electronic workflows for logistic services.	Project to be put on the IT priority list for 2022.	Priority reviewed: Several options were assessed and found too resource intensive for a medium-term development (Agora, ABAC). An in-between system was set up in Phoenix.
Final «content approval» workflow CoP, Bureau, Plenary Session	Validated «content approval» workflows for Conference of Presidents, Bureau and Plenary	Achieved: Mixed «Content approval» workflows operational for Bureau and Plenary. Sharepoint «content approval» workflow were developed and tested for CoP.
Number of changes implemented in the processes and supporting IT-systems.	100% of needed changes implemented translated into updated political and administrative processes and supporting IT-systems	Achieved: 100% of needed changes implemented, translated into updated political and administrative processes and supporting IT-systems.
Increased contribution by the protocol service in the correspondence for the CoR President.	Smooth administrative processes to increase the involvement of the protocol in drafting the relevant correspondence.	Achieved: New Style Guide published. 633 Adonis files created and checked (often several letters per Adonis file)
New CoR rules on public access to documents implemented.	Establishment of a public register of documents where all the documents listed in the Appendix to Decision 18/2020 are available (2022).	Achieved: Public register of documents available.

Objective 3. Coordinate cross-cutting strategic planning for CoR's political and legislative work and develop CoR's capacity and activities on foresight and coordinate the inter-institutional relations as well as the relations with the European and national associations of LRAs.

Directorate A for Members, Plenaries and Strategy

Political/Administrative priorities supported:



Indicator	Target for 2022	Last results from 2022
Definition of annual strategic guidelines by the CoP and timely reports to CoP on implementation and impact of CoR priorities.	Conclusions endorsed by the CoP and follow-up actions defined. New Strategic Guidelines for the CoR's Commissions for 2023.	Achieved: State of play of the implementation of the CoR priorities for 2020-2025 were presented to the Conference of Presidents (CoP) in November 2022. The Strategic guidelines for 2023 were adopted by the CoP in November 2022. Task Force 1 on Strategic Planning meetings took place to break silos and coordinate on cross-cutting issues.
Timely reports to CoP on the state of play of CoR foresight activities.	A Roadmap towards a CoR Foresight Action Plan submitted to CoP in the 2nd semester 2022. Ensure participation of the CoR in ESPAS activities. «ESPAS Ideas Paper» on «Digital Cohesion» presented in the ESPAS structures in September 2022.	Achieved: Results of survey among CoR members and a set of proposals to develop foresight activity at the CoR were discussed by the CoP in January 2022. A CoR roadmap on foresight activities was adopted by the CoP in September 2022 and implementation started. Regular participation of the CoR in ESPAS activities was ensured. «ESPAS Ideas Paper» on «Digital Cohesion» was presented in the ESPAS structures in October 2022 and was published by ESPAS and presented during the 2022 ESPAS Annual Conference.
Participation, debriefing and follow-up in various inter-institutional coordination bodies (e.g. Inter-institutional coordination group (ICG)).	Ensure continuity of participation and debriefing to TF1 members.	Achieved: CoR participation in ICG and in the EP CoP (for the item on the Plenary Session Agenda) ensured.
Joint activities organised.	Reinforcing cooperation on joint thematic priorities.	Achieved: A Joint CoR-EPRS Virtual Retreat was organised in February 2022.

Coordination of relations with Council Presidencies, in particular of the referrals process.	Get the referrals letters in due time.	<p>Achieved: Concerning French Presidency and Czech Presidency:</p> <p>Referral letters from the French and the Czech Presidencies (1st and 2nd semester 2022) received in December 2021 and June 2022, respectively to which the CoR responded with the adoption of opinions.</p> <p>Partially Achieved:</p> <p>Concerning Swedish Presidency:</p> <p>Although contacts with representatives of the Swedish Presidency (1st semester 2023) were initiated in the second half of 2022, because of a change of government there were delays in receiving the referral letter (in February 2023).</p> <p>This makes the CoR's response to the referrals within the timeframe of the Presidency more difficult, although the CoR will deal with the issues raised in various forms.</p>
Meetings organized with European associations.	Continue the dynamic of regular meetings and exchange of information on topics of mutual interest.	<p>Achieved:</p> <p>Meetings at SG level in January and July 2022 to exchange information on planning of main activities, share feedback from implemented initiatives and prepare further joint actions.</p>
CALRE involvement in the preparation of the annual European Commission Work Programme (ECWP).	Monitor the take up of CoR recommendations in the ECWP and ensure related follow-up dialogue with CALRE members.	<p>Achieved:</p> <p>Consultation of CALRE on the European Commission Work Programme 2023 carried out in the first semester 2022.</p> <p>Resulting contribution prepared in view of the CoR Resolution on the ECWP 2023.</p>

Overall, in 2022, the CoR coordinated or supported:

- The adoption of the Strategic Guidelines for 2023, including the stocktaking of the implementation of the CoR's priorities for 2022.
- The approval of the CoR's roadmap concerning foresights –which aims to mainstream foresight into the CoR's thematic work, create training and knowledge on foresight for CoR members and staff, and link the levels of foresight work in regions and cities with the EU level– and CoR's regular participation and contribution to ESPAS activities.
- The work of the CoR with the Council Presidencies, including the planning of referrals.
- The cooperation of the CoR with European associations of local and regional authorities, organizing twice a year meetings at the level of the secretaires-general to ensure exchange and cooperation on activities and priorities of mutual interest. The annual project with the Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies (CALRE) on the European Commission's work programme was also organised, and will be adjusted in 2023 to the specificities of an end-of-cycle programme of the Commission.
- The adaptation of processes and the IT developments required by the revised Rules of Procedure, as well as the deployment of the Multi-factor Authentication with respect to members.
- The work to review the legal framework governing the organisation of CoR activities and the reimbursement of expenses continued, with a view to simplification and adaptation to the post-pandemic circumstances.
- The modernization of the One-Stop-Shop website and preparing its relocation to the public CoR webpage and broadened the online information resources and documentation support to members.
- The adoption of a new language policy, which updates the interpretation and translation guidelines towards statutory meetings, including priority setting amongst interpreting languages in cases of force majeure.

Moreover, in 2022 the CoR managed more than **12,000 financial transactions** for various participants in CoR meetings. Logistic services were provided for over **2,884 meetings and other activities**, and ensured interpretation when requested. Protocol assistance was offered to **283 VIP delegations** visiting CoR representatives or attending CoR high-level events, and **463 visitors groups** were welcomed in person with overall number of visitors approaching pre-pandemic level (with a total of **14,821 visitors**). Additionally, **322 transport mission** were executed.

COVID-19 Impact on the 2022 Activities: The Directorate for Members, Plenaries and Strategy adapted well to the new ways of working required by the exceptional circumstances (COVID-19 pandemic) still met in 2022. Nonethe-

less, particular strain was put on some of the teams, considering that organising remote or hybrid meetings or electronic submission of files entail a number of challenges, which we successfully addressed.

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.

Directorate B and Directorate C for Legislative Work

Political/Administrative priorities supported:



Indicator	Target for 2022	Last results from 2022
Adopted CoR Opinions total: -On legislative proposals. -On non-legislative proposals.	57 8-17 40-49	1) Achieved: 55 adopted opinions 2) Achieved: 18 opinions on legislative proposals 3) Partially Achieved: 37 opinions on non-legislative proposals
Subsidiarity: -Number of CoR opinions with specific reference to subsidiarity. -Number of subsidiarity grids delivered for CoR opinions on legislative dossiers.	20 10	1) Achieved: 24 2) N/A ²
Adopted resolutions	6-9	Achieved: 8 resolutions
Number of non-statutory events/seminars/workshops (including online) and hearings/stakeholder consultations (including written).	118-126	Achieved: 186 ³
Number of «follow-up of opinions meetings» organised.	43-45	Achieved: 79
Number of Studies published per year and EPRS consultations: - Studies - EPRS (European Parliamentary Research Service)	25-30 10-19	Achieved: 24 studies on the CoR website; 13 EPRS consultations
Percentage of CoR Opinions sent to the EU institutions in time (before final vote in the leading committee of the EP or in Plenary)	100%	Achieved: 100%
Number of references of results of networks/platforms in CoR opinions/resolutions.	18	Achieved: 22

² In 2022 The European Commission has produced 20 impact assessments including the subsidiarity grid, but not specifically "delivered for CoR opinions on legislative dossiers". A reflection will be conducted to assess the pertinence of this indicator and envisage its adjustment.

³ High increase in non-statutory events/seminars/workshops and hearings/stakeholder consultations in 2022 is due to the COFE (CoR organised 14 meetings with COFE delegates and 9 COFE preparatory meetings with their assistants with representatives from associations) and the war in Ukraine which lead to the organisation of multiple meetings in the CoR process to support Ukraine and its LRAs. Online participations to events and conference allowed CoR members to increase the number of follow-up of opinions meetings over the initial expectations.

<p>Digitalisation of the administrative environment:</p> <p>1) Timely deploy a new digital tool for submission of amendments (E-AM)</p> <p>2) Promote the use of the IT knowledge hub on the CoR Political work (KIKLOS);</p> <p>3) Adopted opinions with objectives</p>	<p>1) Phases 1 and 2 deployed by 30/06/2022</p> <p>2) - 80-100% of adopted opinions in the previous year (N-1).</p> <p>3) 30 per year</p>	<p>1) Partially Achieved:</p> <p>Phase 1 (EAM as back-office tool to deal with amendments) deployed 12/5/2022; Phase 2 (Rapporteurs' amendments in Members' Portal) planned for full deployment in April 2023</p> <p>2) Achieved: 96,30%</p> <p>3) Achieved: 30 in 2022</p>
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Objective 5. Cooperate with the EU Institutions when deciding on EU programmes and policies.

Directorate B and Directorate C for Legislative Work

Political/Administrative priorities supported:



Indicator	Target for 2022	Last results from 2022
Number of MEPs/commissioners invited to the CoR Commissions.	47-52	Achieved: 45 MEPs (AIR) + 14 commissioners
Number of CoR members in EP committee meeting/inter-groups.	13	Achieved: 20 CoR members in EP committees' meetings
Number of CoR rapporteurs/CoR administration meetings with PermReps/ Council (also at administrative level with regard to the Council Working Parties).	29	Partially Achieved: 26 CoR rapporteurs' meetings with PermRep/Council
Support the migration towards a new XML environment (EdIT) to further integrate the CoR political work in the EU legislative lifecycle:	100 % (on request of leading directorate).	Not Achieved: Deployment of this project has been postponed for alteration in IT priorities of the Committee.
-Draft new templates for opinions and resolutions -Test the IT tool.		Not Achieved: Deployment of this project has been postponed for external reasons.
Number of Action Plans shared with European Commission services.	9	Not Achieved: 6 (Target overestimated)
Number of Presidency events meetings with active participation of CoR members/rapporteurs.	16	Achieved: 25

This overview of the main achievements in 2022 is structured around the CoR political priorities for the 2020-2025 mandate, namely:

- bringing Europe closer to citizens,
- building resilient local and regional communities,
- promoting cohesion as an overall value of the EU.
- More detailed information on the CoR's achievements in 2022 can be found in the 2022 Annual Impact Report of the CoR available on the CoR website.

Bringing Europe closer to its people

In 2022, as the geopolitical spotlight has abruptly moved from COVID-19 to **Ukraine**, the CoR's activities continued to be focused on the priority policy areas defined within each of the CoR's commission thematic remits, while tackling the challenges brought by this new crisis.

As a response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the CoR mobilised its political support for Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty, for its people, and its local leaders, supporting Ukraine's European integration and accession process with a focus on decentralisation reform and devolution of powers, offering the CoR's platform and networking capabilities to steer the most urgent needs, organising summer camps for Ukrainian children, promoting peer-to-peer cooperation, and ensuring that the process was supported by sufficient, preferably direct, funding by the EC. In cooperation with the EU and Ukrainian associations of LRAs, the CoR launched the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for the Reconstruction of Ukraine, which conducted a massive outreach and awareness-raising programme aimed at promoting the Alliance and obtaining the political support of all key EU and UA associations of LRA.

In October 2022, the CoR published the third edition of the **EU Annual Report on the State of Region and Cities**. This report represents a snapshot of the most pressing challenges faced by regions and cities across the Union, and helps to inform EU policy decisions. 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. In line with the geopolitical context, the 2022 edition of the Report focused on the economic and social consequences of Russia's war against Ukraine, the lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the necessary recovery, the climate emergency and energy transition, the fight against inequalities, and the future of democracy building on the conclusions of the Conference on the Future of Europe.

The CoR actively participated in 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. To assist delegates, the CoR COFE secretariat created the COR COFE Platform, where it stored hundreds of documents related to the Conference, available not only to the 30 delegates but also to their collaborators and all CoR members and staff. Prior to each of the COFE plenary session, a preparatory meeting of the Delegation took place, in Strasbourg, in hybrid mode. Moreover, similar preparatory meetings took place with the collaborators of all 30 delegates (including the political groups). Lastly, the CoR created a dedicated Task Force 4 'Conference on the Future of Europe' to coordinate the work of all directorates and units involved. The COFE final conclusions included several proposals relevant to the local and regional level. This successful outcome was the result of active participation of the 30 delegates in the work of the COFE. Specifically, the final conclusions included references to 'the recognition of the European repre-

sentative democracy at local and regional level in order to increase the democratic legitimacy of the EU', 'multi-level governance and the importance of subsidiarity' and 'the enhancement of the role of the CoR in the institutional architecture', among many other topics.

New ways of cooperating between all thematic commissions of the CoR have led to co-drafting the **EU Charter on Youth and Democracy** which represents a substantial contribution to the European Year of Youth 2022, as well as concrete follow-up action on the COFE.

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.

The **Territorial Impact Assessment (TIA)** strategy was revised to implement recommendations from an internal audit on the adequacy of CoR territorial impact assessments and to improve the efficiency of TIA activities as an integral part of the CoR Better Regulation agenda, led by the newly set-up CoR Better Regulation and Active Subsidiarity Steering Group (BRASS-G).

Building resilient regional and local communities

The CoR had significant impact on the **implementation of the RRF**, including through engagement with the EP, whose June resolution explicitly references CoR work and requests. In addition, the CoR work on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) resulted in close links being established with the European Commission Secretariat General and the Council Working Group on the 2030 Agenda, with invitations received from both institutions to deliver input to the EU Voluntary Review to be presented in 2023 at the UN.

The CoR co-organises and co-chairs with the European Commission the **Zero Pollution Stakeholder Platform**, which organised multiple activities in 2022, in particular three main platform meetings: April meeting focused on health; October meeting focused on local and regional aspects and was connected with a high-level workshop at the European Week of Regions and Cities; December meeting was the first Zero Pollution Stakeholder Conference focused on the presentation of the first Zero Pollution Monitoring and Outlook Report.

The CoR attended the international biodiversity conference (**CBD COP15**) and for the first time was explicitly mentioned in a decision derived from a United Nations body, as one of the key partners to support and facilitate the implementation of the Plan of Action of the Kunming-Montreal global biodiversity framework.

The CoR also attended the international climate conference (**UNFCCC COP27**) with a delegation of 6 members. The COP conclusions recognised subnational governments as key actors to broaden climate action, with the inclusion of cities as an important element of the Global Goal on Adaptation Framework. At COP27, the first-ever Ministerial on Climate and Urbanisation was organised, with the attendance of the

CoR, and a Presidency Initiative on Sustainable Urban Resilience for the Next Generation (SURGe) was launched.

The **Green Deal Going Local working group** has hosted discussions with the European Parliament rapporteurs on the Fit for 55 package, as well as with the Cabinet of Commissioner Simson on the energy crisis and its impact on local and regional authorities.

Within the CoR 4 Climate Pact project, the development of the **IT tool Members+**, has been refined including a database for gathering and filtering best practices from CoR members, besides including their climate commitments and the participation in Green Deal initiatives. Furthermore, the ENVE Commission developed and launched the [Green Deal Going Local Handbook](#), an interactive tool to assist local and regional authorities in implementing green deal policies and accessing financial and technical assistance.

In Environmental Policy, the CoR opinion on the **8th Environment Action Programme (EAP)** had a significant impact on the final EAP text approved in 2022, in particular the addition of a specific reference to enhanced cooperation with the CoR and references to regional specificities, participation of LRAs and multi-level governance, ensuring adequate resources for LRAs and others.

Bringing food security and territorial resilience to the forefront was another challenge related to the war in Ukraine that the CoR tackled in a large dedicated study, an influential opinion, an address in the Council and a series of meetings with the MEPs and UN agencies. All these activities shaped the CoR position on food security and made it clear that local and regional authorities play a key role in Europe's **strategic food sovereignty**.

Through consultative works, tight cooperation with the EP services and their representatives, a thematic seminar with the Presidency of the Council and finally thanks to the high-profile Rural Pact launch and dedicated conference, the CoR has firmly set the objective of making **Europe's rural areas** thrive on interinstitutional agendas.

Working closely with the European Commission, the Parliament and the UN WTO, the CoR also shaped the thinking on **tourism and its relaunch** to move away from quantity while favouring quality and sustainability. Some examples of these are a widely mediated conference in Galicia, an action plan with the UN agency, an annual jury duty to select the European Capital of Smart Tourism and the anticipatory work to pave the way to the new set of EU rules on short term rentals.

On top of this, the CoR is also behind the launch of the **EU Organic Awards**, designed to hail excellence in the organic value chain and raise public's awareness of the benefits of organic foods. This again demonstrates the NAT commission ability to respond to both citizens COFE requests as well as farmers and politicians needs with innovative policy actions.

In the areas of **Research and Innovation**, 2022 was the second 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. In addition to the legislative work in research and innovation (R&I), the CoR ensured participation in the European Research Area (ERA) and continued to be a valuable partner in the implementation of the European Missions. In what is perhaps the most important development in the cooperation with the JRC, the Partnerships for Regional Innovation (PRI) initiative gained full momentum in 2022, so far involving 4 Member States, 63 regions, 7 cities and 6 regional networks.

In the **social and employment sectors**, on top of its legislative works, the CoR approached the European Labour Authority (ELA) to establish closer cooperation between the institutions, culminating with the presence of ELA's executive director in the SEDEC commission external meeting and conference in Brno in October.

Cohesion as a fundamental value

The CoR put forward its views on the findings of the 8th Cohesion Report, providing input to the discussion on the extension of the flexibility measures introduced by the Cohesion's Action for Refugees in Europe (CARE and FAST-CARE), and closely cooperating with its partners in the strategic **#CohesionAlliance**, which was renewed in October 2022 in view of the upcoming reflections on Cohesion Policy post-2027.

The CoR also organised two multi-level dialogues on Just Transition as part of the Just Transition Platform and played a key role in the launch of the **Automotive Regions Alliance** at the June 2022 CoR Plenary session and the organisation of the first ARA annual conference in November 2022 in Leipzig, which obtained a high attention in the media. As a key impact of this work, the CoR and the ARA were included in the Regulation on "CO2 emissions standards for cars and vans" as one of the entities to be consulted when the European Commission prepares its report on the needs and funding gaps for a just transition of the automotive regions. The ARA is also part of the "Route 35" platform which was founded by the European Commissioner for the Internal Market and brings together all relevant stakeholders.

CoR rapporteurs intervened in several EP Committees on mobility related issues. For example, concerning the **TEN-T Guidelines**, the CoR rapporteur addressed the European Parliament's TRAN Committee and presented the main points of her opinion and the key aspects from a regional perspective. Similarly, the CoR rapporteur for the **New Urban Mobility Framework** addressed the European Parliament's REGI Committee (associated committee) on the CoR's policy recommendations in this field of direct relevance for economic, social and territorial cohesion, which resulted in a number of the CoR's recommendations being taken up in the REGI Committee's report.

As regards **Digital Policy**, the CoR Territorial Forecast study on addressing the digital divide and promoting digital cohesion was selected by the EU Publications Office as one of its key publications. The CoR also developed and broadened the scope of the EC-CoR broadband platform to all aspects of a successful digital transition at local and regional level. Furthermore, it contributed to the final development of

LORDI (*Local and Regional Digital Indicators*) and the use of LORDI indicators for a new local and regional maturity assessment tool, developed in cooperation with ESPON⁴ and different city networks within the living-in.EU initiative.

COVID-19 Impact on the 2022 Activities

In 2022, the impact of COVID-19 was less pronounced than in 2021, therefore, the CoR was able to return to almost normal working arrangements.

The improving health situation allowed the CoR to hold its meetings in Brussels, external meetings and conferences as well as its external study visits in person. The members of the CoR praised and enjoyed the return to normality.

A hybrid format for some meetings has proven to be advantageous in certain circumstances, especially for non-statutory events or stakeholder consultation meetings, as it allows

for flexibility for those who would otherwise be unable to participate and, therefore, ensures a wider outreach, because the number of participants significantly increases, and, as a consequence, also their input into the CoR's work.

The CoR's Joint Consultative Committees and Working Groups resumed their normal autumn meetings in the partner countries. Online/hybrid meetings worked as a temporary solution, but cannot replace in-person meetings in international diplomacy. Some speakers could intervene online when physical presence was impossible or difficult (e.g. Ukrainian speakers).

In the same time, the secretariats fully followed the new teleworking decision and the results were delivered seamlessly, independently if working from home or in the office. There is a high level of satisfaction and engagement among the teams and clear willingness to continue working in the same flexible way.

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

Objective 6. Implement EU policies and programmes at local and regional level and Act as Ambassador of Europe in the municipalities, cities and regions.

Directorate B and C for Legislative Work

Political/Administrative priorities supported:



Indicator	Target for 2022	Last results from 2022
Number of events linked to consultative works	50	Achieved: 80 ⁵
Number of capacity building projects implemented.	2-3	Achieved: 6
Number of local participants in external activities of the CoR Commissions	350-600	Achieved: 3,015 ⁶

⁴ EU-funded programme that supports public authorities responsible for designing territorial policies with quality expertise.

⁵ A significant increase in events linked to consultative works compared to the planning is due to the release from pandemic condition which allowed to travel again and to make the CoR voice heard at the localities. This increase is also explicable by the fact that the CoR was particularly involved in the COP27 side events in 2022.

⁶ A significant increase in the number of events compared explained above had also an impact of the number of participants in the events. Thanks to the release from pandemic condition which allowed to travel again and to make the CoR voice heard at the localities and invite a high number of local participants. example: 1000 participants to the European Climate pact in Lodz.

CBF 3. Foster sub-national politicians' dialogue with the citizens on Europe's achievements and challenges and ensure contact with media.

Objective 7. Focus CoR communication on three campaigns.

Directorate D for Communication

Political/Administrative priorities supported:



Indicator	Target for 2022	Last results from 2022
Media outreach	2022: To maintain (nb resource cuts) 2023: To increase further (nb 5% request)	Achieved: 18,890 media mentions (20 % more since the start of the mandate in 2020). 153 journalists attending CoR plenaries and events.
Digital engagement	2022: To maintain (nb resource cuts) 2023: To increase further (nb 5% request)	Achieved: At the end of 2022, the CoR had 175,500 followers on its channels (+16%), of which 54.800 followers (+8%) on Twitter, 58,100 (+6%) on Facebook, 52,100 (+33%) on LinkedIn and 10 500 (+67%) on Instagram. This reflects similar audience expansion as in 2021.

COVID-19 Impact on the 2022 Activities

2022 was a transitional period with the CoR leading efforts to the return to fully fledged person meetings and events. However the potential of hybrid was totally exploited to enlarge targeted publics and improve outreach, as shown by the meaningful enlarged number of participants of the European Week of Regions and Cities and of the Marseille Summit.

Objective 8. Increased outreach of the CoR's consultative works through targeted communication.

Directorate D for Communication

Political/Administrative priorities supported:



Indicator	Target for 2022	Last results from 2022
Number of YEPs and YEP alumni	450	Achieved: Overall, 775 participants in all YEP events (+15% compared to 2021).
Number of Councillors	2,000	Achieved: CoR Network of local and regional elected politicians reached 2,037 registered members by 31 December 2022
Number of politicians participating in the 9th Summit of Regions and Cities in 2022. Possible 10th Summit in 2023 (ES Presidency)	2,500	Achieved: The 9th European Summit of Regions and Cities in Marseille (3-4 March 2022) gathered 3,100 on/site and on/line attendees- more than half of whom elected politicians, amongst whom 286 CoR members and 130 YEP's; 104 journalists; 90 speakers.

The purpose of the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) communication activities is to **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.

A few examples:

- Organisation of the Marseille Summit that gathered around 1,500 regional and local politicians to discuss key topics. The adoption of the Marseille Manifesto paved the way for the Conference of the Future of Europe (COFE) conclusions on increasing the role of Local and Regional Authorities at EU level;
- Increased outreach to the one million elected regional and local politicians by developing the "CoR Regional and Local EU Councillors' Initiative" (More than 2,000 EU Councillors by the end of 2022) and developing synergies with the European Commission's pilot-project "Building Europe with Local Councillors";
- Defining and implementing the Communication plan to maximise the visibility of the third edition of the EU Annual Report on the State of Regions and Cities. The Report generated unprecedented media and political attention. Developing and overseeing the Regional Barometer that complemented the Report.

COVID-19 Impact on the 2022 Activities

2022 was a transitional period with the CoR leading efforts to the return to fully fledged meetings and in person events. However, all the opportunities and potential offered by the hybrid were exploited to enlarge target publics and improve CoR's outreach.

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

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

Directorate B and Directorate C for Legislative Work

(See above, p 19)

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

Directorate B and Directorate C for Legislative Work

(See above, p 20)

Objective 6. Implement EU policies and programmes at local and regional level and Act as Ambassador of Europe in the municipalities, cities and regions.

Directorate B and Directorate C for Legislative Work

(See above, p 23)

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

Objective 9. CoR in the digital post-COVID-19 world.

Directorate D for Communication

Political/Administrative priorities supported:



Indicator	Target for 2022	Last results from 2022
<p>Indicators based on «IT for a purpose»: All IT-related decisions which are relevant for the business side (projects and digital workplace) are based on real user needs, approved within the CoR's IT governance frame and timely delivered.</p>	<p>All IT-related decisions which are relevant for the business side are based on a Business Case and PIR, approved by MM and measured against project-specific KPIs.</p>	<p>Achieved:</p> <p>The lean IT governance based on Project Initiation Requests and Business Cases demonstrated its added value with 5 new projects approved in 2022 and 16 projects delivered in collaboration with Task Force 8 (TF8).</p> <p>The new IT governance continued to increase transparency in IT programming and development planning.</p> <p>At the end of 2022 the TF8 was transformed into the informal Digital CoR – Community of Practice open for all CoR colleagues interested in digital matters, exchange experience, share knowledge and learn about new developments.</p> <p>In conjunction with the Digital CoR – Community of Practice, the joint EESC/ COR Digital Workplace Pilot Group was transformed into a permanent network to continue defining practical recommendations of the use of applications without business ownership such as Microsoft 365 collaborative tools, SharePoint, Teams, etc.</p> <p>Moreover, the IT Coordination team continued to liaise with CoR members of the Digital Future Group (DFG) on several Members-facing IT applications and IT matters.</p> <p>A prominent example of the DFG's impact in 2022 was the strong support for the CoR's efforts to strengthen cybersecurity by actively facilitating the rollout of the Multifactor Authentication for Members.</p>

All services across the CoR and DL/IT are aligned in providing high quality digital/hybrid meetings and events.	One lead service coordinates the entire choreography and web streaming of CoR key events.	<p>Achieved:</p> <p>Web streaming: In 2022, streaming was fully operational at the CoR with 188 events streamed on our multilingual platform.</p> <p>External events in multiple languages (e.g., summit of Marseille) are now able to be streamed. The web streaming service made possible to push lives (+50 over 2022) to the social networks of the CoR or its partners (Council, EP President, etc.).</p> <p>It also allows the various CoR teams to cut video clips and easily communicate them to the end clients and the archiving of sessions, being fully GDPR compliant.</p>
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The IT Coordination team continued to deliver IT for purpose by providing necessary (IT and digital) support to ongoing projects as well as to new projects requests in line with the efforts led by the Secretary General for our institution to go digital.

COVID-19 Impact on the 2022 Activities

Potential time-savings for the political works of members: even though unintended the online Commission- and Plenary meetings freed time for Members to be in their constituencies in the time of COVID-19 crisis.

Time-savings at the level of the administration: due to COVID-19 related working from home, travel time and resources were saved.

Reduction of the number of rules and procedures: easier procedures for online meetings were developed and the use of TEAMS by the staff was a big gain in time.

However, it should be noted that 2022 was a transitional year in line with the efforts to move to a fully fledged person meetings and events. Upcoming years will make full use of the combined opportunities and synergies of in office and teleworking.

Objective 10. Ensure appropriate budget allocation, uphold sound and regular management of financial resources and monitor a cost-effective internal control environment in the institution.

Directorate E for Human Resources and Finance

Political/Administrative priorities supported:



Indicator	Target for 2022	Last results from 2022
Acceptance of the CoR's budget by the Budget authority	CoR DB 2023 to be adopted by the CoR's Plenary in April 2022	<p>Achieved:</p> <p>The CoR DB 2023 was adopted by the CoR's Plenary in April 2022. The definite 2023 budget was adopted by the Budget Authority in November 2022 (including the CoR part).</p>
Acceptance of external transfers by the Budget authority	100%	<p>Achieved:</p> <p>All 6 external transfers of appropriations were accepted by the Budget Authority in 2022 and executed by the CoR thereafter.</p>
Percentage of commitment execution	97%	<p>Achieved:</p> <p>CoR 2022 budget outturn (commitment execution) has reached 99.2%.</p>

Percentage of payments execution	90%	Partially Achieved: CoR 2022 budget payment execution has reached 88.0%.
Discharge from Discharge Authority	Discharge obtained (for 2020 and 2021)	Achieved: The discharge was obtained for the 2020 discharge process (final EP Plenary decision taken in May 2022). For 2021 discharge process the final EP Plenary decision is expected in May 2023.
Average number of days to verify files by the central verification service	Maximum 5 working days	Achieved: In 2022, the average handling time is 1,7 days per file (stable compared to 2021)

Budget management:

- During the 2022 **budget implementation** year (i) 30 *internal transfers* of appropriations were executed (in total for € 2.3 million), and (ii) 5 *external transfers* of appropriations have been approved by the Budget Authority and executed by the CoR thereafter for a total of € 2 million. Thus, at the end of 2022 some € 4.3 million (representing 3.9% of the CoR 2022 budget) were reallocated to different domains/projects that needed a reinforcement.
- The European Commission tabled the **draft Amending Budget 2022** in October 2022. It was adopted by the Budget Authority in November 2022. 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:
 - › € 1.2 million for the remuneration and allowances (BL 1200);
 - › € 400,000 for its share of the remaining energy cost (BL 2024, joint cost with the EESC).
- The project **“Tapping into the regional and local authorities’ potential to strengthen the EU”** was further developed throughout 2022. The project aims 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. This project will have to be pursued by the CoR in one or another way in the coming years as a result.

Public Procurement:

- Since the e-Submission tool was deployed in January 2021, all high-value tender procedures (i.e., above the Directive threshold of 140,000€) have been launched with e-Submission, allowing for a **digital submission of tenders**. As from 2022, e-Submission was made available also for low and middle value procedures (i.e., above 15,000€), thus expanding further the digitization of the public procurement sector (e-Procurement).

- 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, **68% of all commercial invoices registered in 2022 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 transactions of Directorates A and E which represented the bulk of the transactions.
- The **reviewed Internal Financial Rules (IFR)**, with emphasis on electronic treatment of files and more efficient and effective financial management, adopted on 1 March 2021 (DEC 0007/2021) have been implemented throughout 2022.
- The **Central Financial Initiation Service (SCIF)** officially set up within Unit E4 as from the 1st of July 2021 has been evaluated after one year. Overall, it has been concluded that the centralisation of the FIA function has been deployed successfully, runs smoothly for the concerned CoR Own Services and has allowed to enhance quality, responsiveness and continuity of financial operations even if substantial assistance to the OIA has however been needed and will continue to be required so as to further consolidate the knowledge and skills of the entire financial community at CoR.
- 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 2022.
- Actions in the sphere of **internal control** continued to be monitored in the Internal Control Standards working group throughout 2022. More details are to be found in Chapter 3. As far as the specific issue of exception reports is concerned, notwithstanding the extraordinary COVID-19 circumstances, there has been in 2022 an increase compared with the number of financial exception reports registered in 2021.

Objective 11. 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.

Directorate E for Human Resources and Finance

Political/Administrative priorities supported:



Indicator	Target for 2022	Last results from 2022
Number of CFAA meetings organised in the year.	6 per year	Achieved: 6 CFAA meetings were organized and carried out in 2022.
Percentage of missions expenses reimbursed within time limit (i.e. within 3 months upon receipt of a complete file).	Stay within a 5% margin as compared to 2021.	Achieved.
Percentage of staff coming to work by a green transport mode (walk, bike or public transport).	70%	Achieved: Latest known result 75.8% (According to mobility survey 10/1/2022).

Planning and Reporting; green efficiency:

- In the course of 2022, an action plan was implemented to increase the cost-effectiveness of the planning & reporting instruments. This review was carried out in the context of the Project Convergence, which aims at enhancing the synergies with other administrative instruments to provide coherence and simplify the procedures and adapt them to the CoR's mission and political priorities. The main changes introduced were: the combination of a multi-annual strategic horizon (5 years) with an annual working programme approach; to move away from an organigram-based format (focused on the "who does it") towards a Political priorities/Core business functions based format (focused on the "what is being done"); to conduct the risk analysis simultaneously with the analysis of political and operational objectives and the needed activities to achieve the core business functions.
- The three Planning and reporting instruments were digitalised in the "Convergence Tool" to simplify the processes and transition to a paper-free environment while improving the data quality and allowing inter-annual data analysis.
- The new platform additionally includes a Monitoring tool allowing 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 identified in exception reports.
- The planning & reporting cycle following the new methodologies was timely coordinated (2023 Annual Operational Working Plan by the end of 2022 and, simultaneously, the risk analysis 2023 was carried out and adopted by January 2023, finally, the 2021 AAR was completed by end June 2022).

Business Continuity

- After an in-depth analysis, the existing Business Continuity Plan was reviewed and a new Business Continuity Framework was adopted in December 2022, aiming at making the methodology more strategic, practical, self-contained, concise, clear, known and practised, and drawing lessons from the experience gained with the handling of the extraordinary COVID-19 situation. It will provide more precise information on the phases of the procedure, the core business functions that need to be restored, the time limits for it, the responsible staff, the recovery strategies and the resources required.

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. Regarding budget, the lowest common denominator principle was followed again for the establishment of the Joint Services 2022 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 have been pursued with a view on adopting a revised mission guide in the course of 2023. The revised mission policy aims at reducing the number of missions (only where physical presence has genuine added value as compared to

remote participation via videoconferencing), at increasing the impact and outreach of staff missions and at fostering sustainable traveling modes wherever feasible.

- A staff survey was organised in Autumn 2021 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 telework 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. They 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 2022. Besides the mentioned further completion of the Convergence project, examples include the digitalisation of many

administrative processes; paperless management (replacement of paper invoices by electronic ones); introduction of collective decisions instead of simple individual decisions with low financial impact resulting in an important reduction in workload for different services; the establishment of the Digital Workplace pilot project (jointly with the EESC), aiming at defining and sharing best practices with digital collaboration tools; consolidation of internal rules and decisions.

Task Force on New Ways of Working

- In addition, a joint Task Force on “new ways of working” (NWoW) has been established jointly with the EESC to reflect on possible further implementation of NWoW features at the Committees, including based on benchmarking exercise towards other EU Institutions, in order to optimise both the way the work is organised and the office space is used, duly taking into consideration the results of the pilot projects on teleworking, the implementation of the building strategy and the specific needs of each Committee.

Objective 12. Optimise the use of human resources on the basis of the institution’s talent management strategy and further develop a human resources policy adapted to the institution’s priorities.

Directorate E for Human Resources and Finance

Political/Administrative priorities supported:



Indicator	Target for 2022	Last results from 2022
Percentage of occupied posts at the end of the year	At least 96%	Partially achieved: 94.5% of posts were occupied on 31/12/2022
Gender balance in senior management	M: 60% F: 40%	Achieved: Gender balance on 1/03/2023 shows 44.4% of female senior managers
Number of cases of internal mobility	12 (depending on reinforced mobility policy)	Achieved: 33 cases of internal mobility.
Percentage of staff having attended the training course on Ethics	75% end of 2022	Achieved: 75% of staff have attended the Ethics training course by end of 2022.
Average number of training days per staff member	5 days	Achieved: 5 days as average number of training days per staff member.

Talent management

- The rolling out of the integrated talent management strategy continued in 2022 by implementing new projects and reinforcing existing ones. The nomination of 6 functional managers. The 'Think tank' continued its work. The 360° Feedback exercise for managers was fine-tuned, thanks to the suggestions and feedbacks collected in 2021. 10 senior and middle managers took part in the 2022 exercise. For the first time, an 'Impact 360 group report' was drafted based on the results of the 360° Feedback exercises 2021 and 2022, measuring the impact of the CoR leaders on the organisation. As individual management support for middle managers, 3 senior managers, 3 middle managers and 3 junior managers have made use of the opportunity to work with a professional coach. A package of implementing provisions to the talent management strategy prepared by the HR services has been discussed with the staff representatives. The package contains provisions for establishing an enhanced, proactive job rotation scheme for certain categories of staff. The CoR internal job shadowing exercise involved 13 guests and 13 hosts, while the first pilot of the interinstitutional job shadowing (already announced in 2021) involved 4 EUIs (including CoR), 15 colleagues from other EUIs and 10 CoR staff. The satisfaction rate was very high (8.31) and the feedback very positive, convincing definitively the European School of Administration (EuSA) to take over the launch of the next interinstitutional exercise (with the support and the backup of the CoR internal mobility service). Since the goal of such exercise stretches from talent management to network building, job satisfaction, enhanced interinstitutional cooperation and corporate identity building, EuSA is the ideal sponsor for letting this project grow. In September 2022, the induction programme for newcomers (introduced in 2021) was evaluated and new measures were integrated in the programme in order to improve the support for new staff to quickly become operational and integrate successfully in their teams. The programme was fully put in place with the organisation of the "entry talk" meeting twice a year. In 2023, the last point of this programme (the mentor network) should be launched.

Staff allocation and recruitment

- The year 2022 was marked by continued efforts to strengthen the political role of the Committee and to ensure optimal use of the available expertise according to the political and administrative priorities of the institution, in the context of the gradual return to the office.
- As a part of the implementation of the new cooperation agreement with the EESC, the new IIT Directorate was created, which required a change in the organisation structure of the Joint Services. Mergers of linguistic services continued also in 2022. Further optimisation of the organisation chart concerns the security service, the printshop, the central public procurement service and the ongoing feasibility study regarding the potential benefits of central financial management of all operations carried out in the Joint Services.

- A large call for expression of interest to attract seconded national experts was organised in 2022. A promotion campaign on CoR web pages and social media channels (LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook) was also conducted.
- HR services were subject to an internal audit on management of vacant posts. The recommendations of the audit will be implemented during 2023.

Staff engagement

- To maintain the commitment, sense of belonging and motivation of staff massively teleworking, 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.
- In order to organise the transition from the COVID-19 environment to a "new normal" based on a hybrid way of working, a pilot project was launched in April 2022, with a new decision on work arrangements where the concepts of result-based management, right to disconnect and work life balance are key. This pilot project has been evaluated end 2022, notably through manager consultation in all Directorates and through a staff satisfaction survey. In all settings, an overall satisfaction with the new features has been expressed. The final feature of the decision will be adopted in 2023.
- The new five-years strategy and action plan for Diversity and inclusion 2022/2026 has been endorsed by the Bureau and adopted by the Secretary-General on 7 July 2022. The shift in concept from equal opportunities to diversity and inclusion policy enhances the scope from equality and non-discrimination only to a wider perspective and ensure a greater mainstreaming of equality, diversity and inclusion throughout our institution. The new multifaceted strategy is 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 but new areas of attention have been set such as the free expression of convictions and beliefs to foster dialogue on religious and philosophical diversity.

Health and well-being

- Changes related to COVID-19 and the transition out of it have had an impact on the health and wellbeing of staff. Whilst the number of shorter term absences have reduced, most probably because it is possible to work from home despite milder symptoms of colds and similar conditions, the number of long-term absences has increased, similar to the development reported in other institutions.
- Staff in medical leave continued to be closely monitored in 2022, 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. Amongst the 14 cases of burn-out which were registered at the CoR in 2022, 12 could be reintegrated through progressive medical part-time.

HR implementing decisions and general matters

- As part of the CoR's employer branding policy, the "Jobs" and "Internships" pages of the CoR website have been further updated. The aim is to upgrade the CoR branding policy in HR management and to position the institution as an attractive employer and an interesting workplace. A particular emphasis has been placed on making the site accessible from any device and for people with disabilities. To raise awareness of the CoR, a group of staff ambassadors has been created and their stories are posted on the new jobs' pages of the CoR website. To keep them alive and grant their accuracy, an update of the staff ambassador's contributions is planned for 2023.
- The CoR's social media channels and LinkedIn accounts were used to promote some job opportunities and reach a wider audience (senior managers, specific profiles such as nurse, translator, engineer, architect, etc.). Moreover, the CoR is increasingly using EPSO's EU Career channels to relay open recruitment notices, which significantly increases the visibility of the CoR and makes it possible to attract more suitable candidates.
- In 2022, a new decision on outside activities and on occupational activities after leaving the service was adopted, replacing Decision No 66/2014, in order to adapt to changing needs, improve administrative efficiency, clarify concepts, obligations and the

authorisation procedure by adding, in particular, the definition of the conditions under which prior authorisation of an activity can be deemed granted, and in order to align with the European Commission's rules (Decision C(2018) 4048 of 16 December 2013) for greater interinstitutional coherence.

- Review of the decisions on Trainees and Seconded national experts, including related guides and templates, 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.

HR Legal Advice

- Provided daily legal advice on HR and Staff Regulations matters, including drafting and reviewing documents with legal impact.
- Handled a complaint procedure of four complainants 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).
- Handled the EESC complaint and whistleblowing procedures concerning a CoR staff member, 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).
- Represented CoR and contribution with impact at the Staff Regulations Committee, CPQS and its sub-working groups, notably on the drafting of the new Invalidation Handbook and interinstitutional exchanges on ethics body, ethical rules and disciplinary procedures.

Objective 13. Provide the AOD with opinions and recommendations on the adequacy of Risk Management, control and governance processes in the framework of his declarations for 2021 and 2022 and for the preparation of the 2023 declaration, with references to the areas already audited.

Internal Audit Service

Political/Administrative priorities supported:



Indicator	Target for 2022	Last results from 2022
Level of acceptance of the audit recommendations by the Authorising Officer by Delegation.	100%	100%

The Internal Audit unit carried out audits for the CoR own services as well as for the joint services shared with EESC. In 2022, one audit carried out in the CoR own services was finalized and concerns the management of vacant posts. Regarding this first audit, all the recommendations were agreed by the AOD.

For each audit, an action plan is defined by the audited entity in agreement with the AOD.

In 2022, three out of the five action plans open concern the own services and are respectively related to the audits on the adequacy

cy of the planning and the management of allowances and reimbursements to members for attendances at meetings, ethics staff awareness and adequacy of territorial impact assessment system. These three action plans have been fully implemented.

The two remaining action plans concern the joint services and were respectively related to the performance of EMAS and the procurement procedure for logistics. The first action plan is

closed whilst the second is still open given the fact that the cooperation expected from EESC to mitigate the risks was longer than expected.

COVID-19 Impact on the 2022 Activities

The internal audit process and filing has been fully digitalised.

Objective 14. Providing efficient legal support to CoR members and bodies.

Legal Service

Political/Administrative priorities supported:



Indicator	Target for 2022	Last results from 2022
Finalisation of the update and consolidation of the existing legal framework applicable to the organisation of CoR activities and the reimbursement of expenses and payment of allowances to certain persons participating in those activities.	The new legal framework is foreseen to be presented to and adopted by CFAA and Bureau in Q1-Q2 2022.	Achieved: Adoption of the Bureau Regulation No 18/2022 of 28/06/2022 amending Reg 3/2021 of 02/02/2021 on the payment of a flat-rate remote meeting allowance for CoR members and duly mandated alternates and rapporteurs' experts and speakers at remote or hybrid remote meetings.
Completing the implementation of the 2020 Code of Conduct	Full implementation of the Code of Conduct is foreseen for 2022: Submission of the declaration of financial interest by all members	Partially achieved: The Legal Service sent reminders by email to the One Stop Shop, provided a template to be addressed by the One Stop Shop to the few members and alternates who have not yet introduced their declaration of financial interest.
Adoption of new internal rules on data protection	***see comments section	Achieved: Adoption of new internal rules on data protection. Decision No 4/2022 of the Bureau of the CoR of 25 January 2022 laying down internal rules concerning 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 of the Regions. Decision on the application of Article 25 of Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 was adopted.

- The Legal Service provided an undefined number of replies to legal requests sent by CoR services and the SG Cabinet on a wide range of legal aspects, including institutional matters, access to documents, public procurement, etc.
- Particular emphasis should be placed on the legal framework linked to the Covid-19 pandemic (e.g. drafting decisions on the organisation of remote and hybrid meetings and legal aspects concerning the payment of the remote allowance for members participating in these meetings).
- This additional workload did not affect the implementation of the objectives laid down in the 2022-2023 SMP in the areas directly dealt with by the Legal Service. However, this placed a significant burden on staff since the Legal Service had to work under considerable time pressure despite the fact that there was a significant turnover of its members in 2022.

Some other key achievements:

- Elaboration and adoption of the mandate to establish an ad hoc commission in charge of revising

the CoR RoP. Its current status is on-going. The Legal Service has already drafted documents related to the revision of the Rules of Procedure, which could be adopted in 2023.

- Access to documents: The Legal Service has dealt with several requests for access to CoR’s documents from third parties in 2022 and has always replied to them (by granting access) within the given deadline in cooperation with the Transparency Unit.
- Following the long-standing CoR request for access to the fourth-column documents of the trilogue in the framework of the ordinary legislative procedure,

the Council decided to provide the requested documents in February 2023.

- The Legal Service has dealt with and adopted a Decision concerning complaints under Article 90§2 of Staff Regulation them in due time (under the statutory deadline).

COVID-19 Impact on the 2022 Activities

In 2022, all the measures and working procedures previously put in place were consolidated. The workflow was properly ensured.

Objective 15. Representing the CoR’s interests in the context of legal proceedings.

Legal Service

Political/Administrative priorities supported:



Indicator	Target for 2022	Last results from 2022
Timely submission of the Committee’s defence/observations	Submission of the Committee’s defence /observation within the deadlines set by the Court.	Achieved: In 2022, the CJEU issued its ruling in the case C-539/21 P, ‘EC v Committee of the Regions’ (‘Sadikoglu’) of 27/10/2022. By this ruling the CJEU dismissed the appeal against the CoR and ordered ‘EC’ to bear its own costs and to pay those incurred by the European Committee of the Regions. The Legal Service was dealing with this appeal in 2022 and won the case before the CJEU protecting the CoR’s interests.

The Legal Service represented CoR’s interests before the European jurisdictions with its usual diligence and high quality standards.

COVID-19 Impact on the 2022 Activities

In 2022, all the measures and working procedures previously put in place were consolidated. The workflow was properly ensured.

Objective 16. Contribute to the implementation of the CoR Digital Strategy. 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.

Directorate IIT for Innovation and Information Technology

Political/Administrative priorities supported:



Indicator	Target for 2022	Last results from 2022
Infrastructure availability (KAPI21)	99%	Achieved: 99.79%
Helpdesk reaction time (KAPI23)	90% within 15s	Achieved: 94.9%
	95% within 30s	

- Under the terms of the Cooperation agreement, the IT Unit was transformed into the Directorate for Innovation and Information Technology on 1/10/2022.
- The new directorate is composed of three units: Digital Transformation – responsible for foresight, innovation and user support, Digital Solutions – responsible for the development and maintenance of information systems, Digital Platforms – responsible for IT infrastructure and cybersecurity.
- The strategic objective remains to provide IT services according to the best practice of IT management while optimising the use of human and financial resources.
- In addition, a specialised Technical Domain works on transversal improvements to all applications. During 2022, further improvements were made to modernising the user experience, to the database layer and to the common components. The Technical Domain continued to participate in the Emerging Technologies subgroup of the Interinstitutional Committee for Digital Transformation.

The main activities during the year for each domain are summarised below.

Digital Solutions

- For Political Work, the main operational applications, Agora and Members Portal, were adapted to support the new business needs including the complex adaptations for the new Rules of Procedure. The development of the new applications for processing amendments proceeded according to plan. Kiklos, Members+ and the Common Consultative Platforms were maintained and developed in line with business requests.
- For Document Management, the search engines were adapted to support multifactor authentication. Electronic workflow management was improved by developing automatic document registration, activity logs for all files, virtual departments and integration with the HR database for access to files belonging to a previous department/position. There was continuous improvement of the other document and translation support services and applications.
- For Communication, the existing catalogue of web services was maintained.
- For Human Resources and Finance, the applications used for supporting the staff and trainee selection processes were upgraded and enhanced.

Digital Platforms

- The main IT Infrastructure projects completed by the Digital Platforms unit during 2022 were SharePoint and Windows Server migrations, enabling Kerberos (technical pre-condition for the generalised deployment of Multifactor Authentication), implementing the hybrid cloud roadmap, adaptation of the network topology required for the new JDE Computer Room. In the area of IT security, the monthly scans of internet systems by CERT-EU showed no high-risk vulnerabilities and there were no security incidents.

Digital Transformation

- During 2022, the most important activities were the ongoing support for remote working, the installation of 23 hybrid meeting rooms and the move of IT equipment to the B100 and VMA buildings. The Digital Transformation unit was also the main point of contact for the working group on “Digital Workplace” and successfully coordinated the IT follow-up. There were on average 2,572 requests to the Helpdesk per month, with 63% of incidents closed within one hour and an ongoing user satisfaction rate of 94%.

COVID-19 Impact on the 2022 Activities

The IT services themselves transitioned smoothly to the new flexible working environment and were indeed early adopters of many of the new digital workplace tools. The

main exceptions to remote working remained the Helpdesk and Telecommunications sectors much of whose work, supporting members and staff, requires on-site presence.

Objective 17. Implementing the building strategy. Prepare for the exchange of B68/TR74 buildings with VMA building and related refurbishment works.

Directorate L for Logistics

Political/Administrative priorities supported:



Indicator	Target for 2022	Last results from 2022
Ensure sufficient space and meeting rooms to pursue the activities of the Committee.	Implementation on 16 September 2022 of the administrative agreement with OIB.	Achieved: the management of the VMA building was taken over from 16 September 2022.
Light renovation of office surfaces in VMA building.	Renovation works of third until ninth floor to be ordered before the end of 2021. Works to be carried out as from the end of 2021 and to be finalized before summer 2022.	Achieved: renovation works were finalized end 2022.
Leading the working group on the future allocation of space after September 2022, without B68 and TR74 and with VMA light renovated	To be achieved.	* See comments section

- On 28 August 2019, an 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 has become effective on 16 September 2022 and at that date the management of the building was taken over from OIB.

This exchange of buildings resulted, however, in a significant loss of office space for the two Committees (about 10,000 m²), which cannot 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.

Therefore, on 22 June 2021, an Administrative Agreement with the European External Action Service has been signed for the takeover of the rental contract of the B100 building as from 1 September 2021.

With the exchange of the B68 and TRE buildings for the VMA building in September 2022 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.

The renovation works of the office floors from the third to the ninth floors were concluded end 2022 in terms of works in offices. Works on the technical installations, especially in the technical rooms as well as the installation of intelligent glazing and cleaning of the facades will continue until mid-2023.

This renovation was necessary to ensure proper functioning in the coming years and concerns mainly: the main renovation, including new sanitary facilities, showers and lounge area for Members; three further objectives: modernise the work environment by installing glass partitions; allow 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; measures to limit energy and water consumption (EMAS/Green Deal objectives).

Moves from the VMA to the B100 building were finalized in March 2022 to be able to start the renovation works in the VMA building. Moves from the Belliard 68, Treves and Belliard 100 buildings to the VMA and the Belliard 100 buildings after the renovation works in the VMA building and after the refurbishment works in the Belliard 100 building, took place between August and November 2022.

INFRA participates in HR's working group on NWOW since September 2022.

COVID-19 Impact on the 2022 Activities

Building on the 2020 experience, it appears that in general most of the DL services have coped quite well with teleworking. Nevertheless, from a “social” perspective, this modus operandi is not ideal and staff suffers from this peculiar virtual dynamics.

The following DL sectors have been particularly affected by the pandemic:

Infrastructures:

More difficult and uncertain planning and budgeting due to longer and sometimes unpredictable delivery times and higher prices for certain supplies.

Remote management and control of suppliers’ activities and performances on site, such as construction works, maintenance and moves, are almost impossible and very difficult. This always requires more physical presence in the office than in other services. However, improvement could be possible through specific practical training.

There was a need to maintain a compulsory presence of smaller teams at the premises for ensuring the business continuity and to supervise the activities on site.

The occupation of shared offices, meeting rooms, conference rooms and public areas had to be adapted following the COVID-19 regulations or internal decisions. As a result of new insights into the risk of infection, the use of the premises may be changed again in the future.

Budget and finances:

Immediate savings were possible due to the general teleworking arrangements and the partial closure of some buildings.

Nevertheless, in the short term, some costs have raised, in particular for:

- energy, several services as well as maintenance and construction works due to a general increase of prices as a consequence of a higher demand combined with a delay in production;
- cleaning and disinfection due to a higher standard of service;
- catering due to a new economic model.

Several contracts had to be adapted to take into account the new COVID-19 pandemic reality.

Objective 18. Setting an ambitious and credible target for the reduction of CO2 emissions.

Directorate L for Logistics

Political/Administrative priorities supported:



Indicator	Target for 2022	Last results from 2022
Study of the potential reduction of CO ₂ emissions for the activities with the most emissions, for 2025 and for 2030.	Finish the study	Achieved: final report became available in January 2023.
Setting an ambitious and credible target for the reduction of CO ₂ emissions of the activities with the most emissions for 2025 and for 2030, including the yearly monitoring and follow-up of EMAS actions as well as of CO ₂ emissions.	New environmental objectives to be defined by the end of 2021, for the period 2019-2025, including a specific target for CO ₂ emissions reduction.	Achieved: in early 2022 new environmental targets were adopted for the period 2022-2025.

- The final report of the study became available on January 2023 and includes the scenario and action plan for activities under the administration’s responsibility regarding the target to reduce 10% of CO₂ emissions by 2030 compared to 2019.
- A carbon neutral strategy has not been drawn up yet.
- A comparison between the Committees data and those of the EP and the Council is ongoing, in order to evaluate strong and weak fields.

- In early 2022, the EMAS Steering Committee adopted new environmental targets for the period 2022-2025, including the carbon footprint reduction target for the period 2022-2030.

COVID-19 Impact on the 2022 Activities

COVID-19 pandemic has had a positive evolution of the environmental impact in several fields with a significant

environmental impact of Committees' activities such as energy consumption, paper consumption, waste management, commuting and missions as well as in a better work-life balance. In 2022 there was a return to less tele-

working and fewer remote meetings but the new normal will include teleworking, hybrid and remote meetings to a large extent.

Objective 19. To further deepen and develop the sustainable multilingualism policy for both Committees, in accordance with the Cooperation Agreement and the Code of Conduct for Translation.

Directorate T for Translation

Political/Administrative priorities supported:



Indicator	Target for 2022	Last results from 2022
Deadline compliance: 1. Timely submission of translation requests. 2. Timely delivery of translation requests.	1. $\geq 90\%$ 2. $> 95\%$	1. Partially Achieved: 88% 2. Achieved: 96.5%
Documents compliance: 1. Documents exceeding maximum length. 2. % new versions to documents in translation.	1. $\leq 5\%$ 2. $< 6\%$	1. Not achieved: 5.6% 2. Not achieved: 12.5%
Outsourcing rate.	$\geq 20\%$	Not achieved: 18.03%

COVID-19 Impact on the 2022 Activities

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significantly lesser impact on DT in 2022 than in previous years. The gradual return to office was marked by fewer online and

more in-person and hybrid meetings. However, some trainings that were previously held in person still had to be done online or altogether cancelled. The inter-institutional exchanges, in particular, were cancelled for a third consecutive year.

Objective 20. To consolidate relations with DT stakeholders and improve integration of translation in the legislative work of the Committee.

Directorate T for Translation

Political/Administrative priorities supported:



Indicator	Target for 2022	Last results from 2022
Number of staff participating in Clear writing training	$>$ 2021 level (69)	Not achieved: 37
Number of edited pages	$>$ 2021 level (11,949)	Achieved: 11,004
Attendance at DT conference	$>$ 2021 level (519)	Not Achieved: 328

Objective 21. To create synergies in the framework of interinstitutional cooperation in the field of translation.

Directorate T for Translation

Political/Administrative priorities supported:



Indicator	Target for 2022	Last results from 2022
KIAPI – Average cost per page	EUR 161.44	Not available yet
Daily workload reference rate	DT: at least 8 pages	Achieved: 9.1 (first half of 2022)
Work-sharing	> 2021 level (375 pages) (if possible, and depending on the evolution of internal translation demand and staffing levels)	Achieved: 389 pages

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 to the SMP, 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 2022 AOWP and the new challenges emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic

was performed in 2022 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).

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 2022. The exercise focused on the ICSs for which the need for improvement was identified in the 2021 assessment.

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 2023.

Already the previous 2021 exercise compliance exercise showed that the overall state of implementation and effectiveness of requirements remained at a high level. The 2022 compliance exercise has shown that the implementation and effectiveness of the requirements of the selected ICSs has stepped up compared to 2021.

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 5 - Objectives and Performance Indicators: Indicators defined by directorates of legislative works (B&C) should be consistent in various processes (AIR, AOWP, AAR). In this framework, the list of indicators should be shortened and unique for all processes.
- ICS 8 - Processes and Procedures: The following existing processes need to be further improved: revision of the mission guide, enhancement of the use of EU sign and setting up a role of Contract Manager for each new framework contract, dealing with exceptions.
- ICS 10 - business continuity: The new BC Policy was approved on December 2022 and we are finally ready to review the BC Plans that are obsolete, incomplete and had not been updated since 2009. Dir E will launch the Operational Business Impact Analysis and the exercise for the definition of the local BC plans in the coming weeks and it will require some workload from all the services for this first exercise.
- ICS 7 - Operational Structures: The sensitive posts policy entered into force on 1 January 2022. The first exercise aims at identifying genuinely sensitive posts and propose the mandatory mobility.

3.3 Internal Financial Legal Framework

On 28 June 2022 the Internal Financial Rules (IFR) for the implementation of the CoR Budget were amended by the Bureau and entered into force on 21 July 2022 (Decision No DECB/21/2022). The purpose of the revision was to

ensure consistency with the Rules of Procedure and with the new system for deputising the functions of the secretary-general and other management functions.

3.4 Budget planning, execution and monitoring

The CoR is a political body with a focused 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

As from 1/07/2021, a reorganisation of the financial management setting at CoR has been decided, reinforcing the centralised counterweight to the decentralised model. In addition to the previously existing central financial verification function, also a Central Financial Initiation Service (SCIF) has been set up within Directorate E and is responsible for the financial initiation of all financial transactions

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:

1. 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.
2. 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 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.
3. Progress of the overall budget execution of politically important budget lines is regularly monitored by the CoR CFAA.
4. Estimates of the execution of salaries' related budget lines, covering some 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 preparation for reallocation of resources within budget lines and, if and where estimated necessary, by initiating transfers of appropriations 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.

of the CoR own services (Members expenditure and staff salaries excluded). An evaluation has been performed over one year and has confirmed that the centralisation of the financial initiation function has been deployed successfully, runs smoothly for the concerned CoR Own Services and has allowed to enhance quality, responsiveness and continuity of financial operations.

In the same spirit of simplification, a simplified workflow has been set up since 1/07/2021 whereby no ex-ante verification is performed by the central verification on a series of low risk/low value transactions but replaced by a quarterly ex-post verification on a sample basis. This simplified workflow has been evaluated after one year and it has been decided to embed the modalities of the simplified workflow for an indefinite period and to limit the scope to the transactions of Directorates A and E which represented the bulk of files.

In 2022, the financial verification service verified 17,994 transactions (salaries excluded) out of which 7,800 transactions have been subject to merely technical ex ante validation (in the framework of the simplified approval workflow). This represents an overall increase of 10% of files submitted by the operational services in 2022 compared to 16,329 in 2021 and a slight increase of 5% compared to the pre-pandemic year 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 2022, 671 CoR and EESC transactions out of a total of 17,994 (compared to 278 out of a total of 16,329 in 2021) verified by the financial verification service were either

3.6 Ex-post control

As in previous years, an ex-post control exercise was carried out also in 2022. The aim of this exercise is (1) to provide a tool for managers to review internally their own procedures and operations in order to identify any potential systemic issues and, based on the findings, (2) to propose and implement measures that would lead to structural improvements.

No major issues were identified. However, a recurrent recommendation resulting from the different ex-post exercises

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 increased compared with the low number of financial exception reports registered in 2021. However, the transactions subject to a financial exception report concern a very small proportion of the total number of financial transactions (salaries excluded) and remained stable compared with previous year: 0.24% in 2022 and 0.23% in 2021.

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

refused for correction (591) or were the subject of financial exception reports or negative opinions from the financial verification service (80 files). This represents an average monthly refusal/correction rate of 3.7% (increase compared to 1.7% in 2021). The increase is explained on one hand by an increase of the refusals of members files in 2022 (in 2020 and 2021 the files were simpler because they mostly related to remote or hybrid meeting allowances with very few aspects to review) and on the other hand by refusals of files stemming from the Directorate for Infrastructure which can be explained by the fact that in 2021 it was the second year that the CoR was verifying IT, PRINT and SECU files under the provisions of the CoR-EE-SC cooperation agreement whereas in 2022 it was the first year of dealing with INFRA files where the complexity and, accordingly, error rate tend to be higher.

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. Starting in 2020 and pursued in the following years, the verification sector made a substantial investment in the advisory function because of the COVID-19 situation and its immediate consequences, such as the transition to 100% of paperless financial workflows in an extended telework setting for all staff.

is the necessity to update written procedures. In 2021 the completeness of the register of procedures increased with 4% points compared to 2021 (97% in 2022 versus 93% in 2021). Considering the changes triggered by the exceptional circumstances (COVID-19) in 2022 and in the light of the various administrative simplification measures being implemented across CoR, many written procedures are being updated to take into account new and paperless workflows.

fied 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 2022 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

Also, 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 add-

ed-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 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. In 2022, considerable further progress has been made in the rollout of the Convergence project, with the implementation of a new Risk Management system, a new Annual Operational Working Plan (AOWP) and the full digitalization of these instruments, including a new monitoring tool to follow-up implementing actions derived from the AOWP, and remedial measures to mitigate the identified risks, the exception reports and the ex-post reports.

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 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 140.000 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. As a result, all procurement procedures handled by the Procurement service are currently digitized and paper free up to the award of the contract stage. The final step in the process continues to be paper based, with the contract's signature still being done in blue ink.

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 2022, the Audit Committee held two meetings where internal audit matters were presented such as the 2021 annual internal audit report, the 2023 audit work program, the audit progress report and the IAS quality assurance and improvement program.

In 2022, the audit on the management of vacant posts was carried out and finalised. On the basis of its findings, the audit report formulated 10 recommendations consisting in the elaboration or the review of strategic and analytical documents, Decisions, service instructions and written procedures.

According to the work programme 2022, a consulting engagement was also performed on the CoR project related to the simplification of the CoR planning and reporting system.

4. 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.

5. 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, 14th June 2023



Petr Blížkovský

6. 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 2022

Annex 5: Report on compliance of the time limits suspension

Annex 6: Provisional annual accounts 2022

Annex 7: Human resources table

Annex 8: Building policy

Annex 9: Activities of the Members of the CoR in 2022

Annex 10: Follow-up to the discharge resolution 2021

6.1 ANNEX 1: Financial resources

Total 2022 approved budget of the European Committee of the Regions («CoR») was € 110 million, including the Amending Budget 5/2022 – salary and energy related (3.0% more than the final budget of 2021).

€ 109.1 million (99.2%) of all appropriations has been committed by the end of 2022 and € 96.8 million (88.0%) has been paid.

1. Use of resources

Commitments in 2022

At the end of the year, the percentage committed from the approved budget was 99.2%.

The commitment execution rate for Title 1 «Expenditure relating to persons working with the institution» was 99.2% and 99.2% for Title 2 «Buildings, furniture, equipment and miscellaneous operating expenditure».

€ 0.87 million (or 0.8%) 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 2021 where € 1.1 million (or 1.1%) was left uncommitted in C1 credits.

Payments in 2022

The overall execution rate for payments was 88.0%. This is more than in 2021 and in the middle of the range observed in previous years. The payment execution rate was 85.1% in 2021 and 82.4% in 2020.

It should be noted that the actual payment execution rate for 2022 will only be known by the end of 2023 when the final payment execution rate of C8 credits of 2023 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 related to 2022 was carried forward to C8 credits of 2023 and most of it shall be paid in 2023.

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 € 60.1 million of which 60.0 million (99.8%) was paid in 2022. This is more in monetary and in percentage terms than in 2021, when € 56.4 million (99.3%) was paid out.

In 2022, the amount of € 6.6 million (80.6%) 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 2021 (€ 2.9 million and 68.2% respectively). These results are substantially affected by the COVID-19 situation.

Title 2: Buildings, equipment and miscellaneous operating expenditure

In total, 69.5 % of the Title 2 budget was paid out in 2022, principally due to the 82.6% 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 2021, 2020 and 2019.

	2022			2021			2020		
	Budget 000 €	Commitments	Payments	Budget 000 €	Commitments	Payments	Budget 000 €	Commitments	Payments
Title 1	79,098	99.2%	95.2%	72,213	98.8%	93.0%	71,340	90.3%	88.8%
Title 2	30,879	99.2%	69.5%	34,528	99.2%	68.6%	30,168	98.5%	67.2%
Total	109,977	99.2%	88.0%	106,741	98.9%	85.1%	101,508	92.7%	82.4%

Title 1: Expenditure relating to persons working with the institution

The execution rate for commitments in 2022 was higher than the respective rate in 2021 and in 2020. The 2022 payment execution rate was higher than in 2021 and in 2020, partially due to the considerably higher payment rate on the budgetary item 1004 «Travel and subsistence allowances, attendance at meetings and associated expenditure» (largely due to COVID-19 effect in 2021 and 2020) and very high payment rate in Chapter 12 «Officials and temporary staff».

Title 2: Buildings, equipment and miscellaneous operating expenditure

The execution rate for commitments in 2022 was the same as in 2021 but higher than in 2020. The payment execution rate was also higher than the rate of 2021 and of 2020. This, in turn, was mainly because of an improvement in Chapters 25 «Meetings and conferences» and 26 «Expertise and information: acquisition, archiving, production and distribution».

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	8,347,598	8,333,927	99.8%	6,703,102	80.3%
1000	Office expenses of members	158,760	158,760	100.0%	113,094	71.2%
1004	Travel and subsistence allowances, attendance at meetings and associated expenditure	8,158,838	8,145,167	99.8%	6,573,307	80.6%
105	Courses for Members of the institution	30,000	30,000	100.0%	16,701	55.7%
12	Officials and temporary staff	60,137,978	60,032,886	99.8%	60,032,886	99.8%
1200	Remuneration and allowances	59,565,863	59,477,487	99.9%	59,477,487	99.9%
1202	Paid overtime	29,302	22,647	77.3%	22,647	77.3%
1204	Entitlements on entering the service, transfer and leaving the service	267,813	267,813	100.0%	267,813	100.0%
1220	Allowances for staff retired in the interests of the service	275,000	264,939	96.3%	264,939	96.3%
14	Other staff and external services	8,990,139	8,507,168	94.6%	7,262,139	80.8%
1400	Other staff	3,725,853	3,689,887	99.0%	3,526,086	94.6%
1402	Interpreting services	3,494,882	3,070,593	87.9%	2,265,915	64.8%
1404	Graduate traineeships, grants and exchanges of officials	770,227	766,363	99.5%	757,292	98.3%
1408	Entitlements on entering the service, transfer and leaving the service and other expenditure for services to staff during their career	41,325	41,325	100.0%	41,325	100.0%
1420	Supplementary services for the translation service and translation and outsourcing-related tools	637,852	619,000	97.0%	506,550	79.4%
1422	Expert assistance related to consultative work	320,000	320,000	100.0%	164,970	51.6%
16	Other expenditure relating to persons working with the institution	1,622,682	1,611,508	99.3%	1,307,632	80.6%
1610	Miscellaneous expenditure on recruitment	20,000	18,581	92.9%	4,825	24.1%
1612	Further training, retraining and information for staff	330,000	326,092	98.8%	264,910	80.3%
162	Missions	419,657	419,657	100.0%	336,449	80.2%
1630	Social welfare	15,000	10,000	66.7%	6,142	40.9%
1632	Internal social policy	9,000	8,153	90.6%	4,813	53.5%
1633	Sustainable staff commuting	41,500	41,500	100.0%	8,086	19.5%
1634	Medical service	114,525	114,525	100.0%	60,123	52.5%
1636	Restaurants and canteens	0	0	N/A	0	N/A
1638	Early Childhood Centre and approved day nurseries	673,000	673,000	100.0%	622,284	92.5%

Ch. / Item	Description	Budget [a]	Commit. [b]	% [b/a]	Payments [c]	% [c/a]
20	Buildings and associated costs	18,920,770	18,915,678	100.0%	15,626,317	82.6%
2000	Rent	1,896,913	1,894,622	99.9%	1,870,201	98.6%
2001	Annual lease payments	9,798,848	9,798,847	100.0%	9,787,931	99.9%
2003	Acquisition of immovable property	0	0	N/A	0	N/A
2007	Fitting-out of premises	883,792	880,993	99.7%	254,081	28.7%
2008	Other expenditure on buildings	2,362	2,362	100.0%	1,809	76.6%
2022	Cleaning and maintenance	2,444,599	2,444,599	100.0%	697,287	28.5%
2024	Energy consumption	1,915,518	1,915,518	100.0%	1,057,472	55.2%
2026	Security and surveillance of buildings	1,903,838	1,903,838	100.0%	1,888,600	99.2%
2028	Insurance	74,900	74,900	100.0%	68,936	92.0%
21	Data processing, equipment and furniture: purchase, hire and maintenance	7,612,265	7,455,608	97.9%	3,927,204	51.6%
2100	Purchase, servicing and maintenance of equipment and software, and related work	1,925,328	1,911,991	99.3%	1,483,774	77.1%
2102	Outside assistance for the operation, development and maintenance of software systems	3,842,677	3,841,612	100.0%	1,300,121	33.8%
2103	Telecommunications	144,662	144,661	100.0%	144,661	100.0%
212	Furniture	126,771	111,181	87.7%	0	0.0%
214	Technical equipment and installations	1,486,474	1,395,429	93.9%	950,497	63.9%
216	Vehicles	86,353	50,733	58.8%	48,150	55.8%
23	Administrative expenditure	336,230	321,999	95.8%	128,014	38.1%
230	Stationery, office supplies and miscellaneous consumables	90,635	89,234	98.5%	21,474	23.7%
231	Financial charges	1,500	1,500	100.0%	151	10.1%
232	Legal costs and damages	30,000	30,000	100.0%	1,925	6.4%
236	Postage on correspondence and delivery charges	58,344	48,200	82.6%	9,470	16.2%
238	Other administrative expenditure	140,883	138,197	98.1%	94,994	67.4%
239	EMAS ⁷ activities, including promotion, and carbon offsetting scheme	14,868	14,868	100.0%	0	0.0%
25	Meetings and conferences	986,770	944,012	95.7%	408,742	41.4%
2540	Costs of meetings organized in Brussels	139,400	103,957	74.6%	42,152	30.2%
2541	Third parties	253,723	253,723	100.0%	119,980	47.3%
2542	Organisation of events in partnership with local and regional authorities, associations and other Union institutions	438,647	438,412	99.9%	175,354	40.0%

Ch. / Item	Description	Budget [a]	Commit. [b]	% [b/a]	Payments [c]	% [c/a]
2546	Representation expenses	155,000	147,920	95.4%	71,256	46.0%
26	Expertise and information: acquisition, archiving, production and distribution	3,022,426	2,979,852	98.6%	1,371,849	45.4%
2600	Relationships with press and audio-visual support	794,854	794,293	99.9%	255,897	32.2%
2602	Web and Social Media and print materials	1,098,960	1,098,527	100.0%	508,943	46.3%
2604	Official Journal	0	0	N/A	0	N/A
2620	External expertise and studies	475,500	474,275	99.7%	272,575	57.3%
2622	Documentation and library expenditure	117,373	102,805	87.6%	80,117	68.3%
2624	Expenditure on archive resources	140,690	140,525	99.9%	79,745	56.7%
264	Communication activities of the political groups of the European Committee of the Regions	395,049	369,427	93.5%	174,573	44.2%
Total Budget:		109,976,858	109,102,637	99.2%	96,767,885	88.0%

Appropriations carried over from 2021 to 2022 (C8 credits of 2022)

The appropriations committed in 2021 but not yet paid out by the end of that year, were carried forward and converted into C8 appropriations of 2022. In total, € 15.0 million – or 14.1% of the CoR's 2021 budget – was transferred into C8 appropriations at the beginning of 2022. This amount was mainly derived from C1 appropriations of 2021.

The total amount of C8 appropriations carried forward from 2021 to 2022 was higher in monetary and percentage terms compared to the previous year when € 11.2 million was carried forward to 2021 (or 11.0% of the CoR's 2020 budget).

The following table gives a summary per title of the carried forward appropriations from 2021 to 2022 (C8).

	Budget (€)	Commitments	Payments
Title 1	4,152,593	97.6%	56.6%
Title 2	10,882,520	98.0%	91.2%
Total	15,035,113	97.9%	81.6%

The execution rate for C8 appropriations of 2022 was 81.6%. In total € 12.3 million was paid out during this year. This is lower than the execution level of 2021 (89.2%).

As a consequence, € 2.76 million or 18.4% of C8 appropriations of 2022 was left unused and returned back to the EU budget at the end of 2022.

Ch. / Item	Description	Budget [a]	Commit. [b]	% [b/a]	Payments [c]	% [c/a]
10	Members of the institution	1,430,523	1,430,523	100.0%	376,413	26.3%
1000	Office expenses of members	43,188	43,188	100.0%	12,419	28.8%
1004	Travel and subsistence allowances, attendance at meetings and associated expenditure	1,349,669	1,349,669	100.0%	354,691	26.3%
105	Courses for Members of the institution	37,666	37,666	100.0%	9,303	24.7%

Ch. / Item	Description	Budget [a]	Commit. [b]	% [b/a]	Payments [c]	% [c/a]
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	Allowance for staff retired in the interests of the service	0	0	N/A	0	N/A
14	Other staff and external services	1,580,773	1,504,568	95.2%	1,089,120	68.9%
1400	Other staff	94,860	78,038	82.3%	78,038	82.3%
1402	Interpreting services	1,069,122	1,069,122	100.0%	883,847	82.7%
1404	Graduate traineeships, grants and exchanges of officials	15,510	10,657	68.7%	10,195	65.7%
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	151,601	97,069	64.0%	95,602	63.1%
1422	Expert assistance related to consultative work	249,681	249,681	100.0%	21,438	8.6%
16	Other expenditure relating to persons working with the institution	1,141,297	1,118,351	98.0%	886,568	77.7%
1610	Miscellaneous expenditure on recruitment	993	532	53.6%	532	53.6%
1612	Further training, retraining and information for staff	97,217	92,214	94.9%	92,214	94.9%
162	Missions	119,835	119,835	100.0%	103,441	86.3%
1630	Social welfare	2,304	1,012	43.9%	1,012	43.9%
1632	Internal social policy	1,309	777	59.4%	252	19.2%
1633	Sustainable staff commuting	20,618	20,618	100.0%	13,859	67.2%
1634	Medical service	42,197	26,538	62.9%	26,538	62.9%
1636	Restaurants and canteens	3,016	3,016	100.0%	0	0.0%
1638	Early Childhood Centre and approved day nurseries	853,809	853,809	100.0%	648,719	76.0%
20	Buildings and associated costs	3,453,950	3,427,792	99.2%	3,136,169	90.8%
2000	Rent	4,910	4,910	100.0%	0	0.0%
2001	Annual lease payments	8,067	8,067	100.0%	4,664	57.8%
2003	Acquisition of immovable property	0	0	N/A	0	N/A
2007	Fitting-out of premises	145,620	145,620	100.0%	145,620	100.0%
2008	Other expenditure on buildings	74,692	70,285	94.1%	52,680	70.5%
2022	Cleaning and maintenance	3,032,269	3,011,467	99.3%	2,750,094	90.7%
2024	Energy consumption	170,201	170,201	100.0%	170,201	100.0%
2026	Security and surveillance of buildings	12,198	11,250	92.2%	11,250	92.2%

Ch. / Item	Description	Budget [a]	Commit. [b]	% [b/a]	Payments [c]	% [c/a]
2028	Insurance	5,993	5,993	100.0%	1,659	27.7%
21	Data processing, equipment and furniture: purchase, hire and maintenance	3,249,620	3,083,050	94.9%	3,051,380	93.9%
2100	Purchase, servicing and maintenance of equipment and software; and related work	128,003	120,684	94.3%	120,684	94.3%
2102	Outside assistance for the operation, development and maintenance of software systems	2,826,745	2,673,493	94.6%	2,673,493	94.6%
2103	Telecommunications	0	0	N/A	0	N/A
212	Furniture	46,500	46,500	100.0%	45,897	98.7%
214	Technical equipment and installations	237,578	231,578	97.5%	201,974	85.0%
216	Vehicles	10,794	10,794	100.0%	9,331	86.4%
23	Administrative expenditure	224,047	219,289	97.9%	129,429	57.8%
230	Stationery, office supplies and miscellaneous consumables	63,650	63,650	100.0%	62,556	98.3%
231	Financial charges	1,349	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
232	Legal costs and damages	31,167	31,167	100.0%	11,040	35.4%
236	Postage on correspondence and delivery charges	32,872	32,872	100.0%	3,875	11.8%
238	Other administrative expenditure	56,392	52,982	94.0%	51,959	92.1%
239	EMAS activities, including promotion, and carbon offsetting scheme	38,617	38,617	100.0%	0	0.0%
25	Meetings and conferences	1,110,946	1,109,412	99.9%	953,299	85.8%
2540	Costs of meetings organized in Brussels	45,302	45,302	100.0%	4,809	10.6%
2541	Third parties	123,424	123,424	100.0%	70,859	57.4%
2542	Organisation of events in partnership with local and regional authorities, associations and other Union institutions	845,839	844,324	99.8%	844,324	99.8%
2546	Representation expenses	96,381	96,362	100.0%	33,307	34.6%
26	Expertise and information: acquisition, archiving, production and distribution	2,843,956	2,826,067	99.4%	2,651,974	93.2%
2600	Relationships with press and audio-visual support	1,360,442	1,350,228	99.2%	1,188,708	87.4%
2602	Web and Social Media and print materials	633,738	633,398	99.9%	633,398	99.9%
2604	Official Journal	0	0	N/A	0	N/A
2620	External expertise and studies	290,320	290,320	100.0%	290,320	100.0%
2622	Documentation and library expenditure	196,630	195,952	99.7%	191,591	97.4%
2624	Expenditure on archive resources	62,320	62,320	100.0%	59,655	95.7%
264	Communication activities of the political groups of the European Committee of the Regions	300,506	293,850	97.8%	288,302	95.9%
Total Budget:		15,035,113	14,719,054	97.9%	12,274,352	81.6%

6.2 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 2022 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 declaration of assurance for the budget lines for which he is responsible.

For the budget exercise 2022, 34 officials appointed as Authorising Officers by Sub-delegation authorised transactions.

Authorising officers by Sub-delegation:

Declaration(s) signed on:

Bachotet Sophie	06 January 2023
Barber Ian	18 April 2023
Battiston Cristina	10 January 2023
Beljaars-Verhoeven Saskia	20 April 2023
Bouquerel Caroline	31 January 2023
Bravo Casado Elena	09 January 2023
Canoto Argüelles Juan Carlos	25 April 2023
Caruso Paola	05 January 2023
Cercone Michele	01 February 2023
Collins Michael	05 January 2023
Da Luz Cintia	06 February 2023
Damyanova Ani	07 March 2023
De Brier Yves	13 March 2023
De Schrijver Patrick	13 March 2023
De Schuiteneer Bart	16 January 2023
Essender Boris	16 January 2023
Feral Pierre-Alexis	10 March 2023
Filipek Francois	06 January 2023
Firmin Thierry	10 March 2023
Gnan Reinhold	04 January 2023
Haenebalcke Tom	30 January 2023
Jakobsson Peder	31 January 2023
Janicaud Benjamin	09 January 2023
Kaduczak Joanna	05 January 2023
Kranjc Marko	31 January 2023
Kronbergs Elmars	11 January 2023
Kudlinska Agnieszka	15 March 2023
Ladwig Achim	09 January 2023
Lamour Michael	24 January 2023
Lavigne Eric	06 January 2023
Mitelman Anna	12 January 2023
Mokhtari Rachida	05 January 2023
Nardi Serafino	12 January 2023
Neascu Milika	06 January 2023

Pankova Katia	05 January 2023
Petzold Wolfgang	20 February 2023
Schmidle Carmen	06 January 2023
Strautina Ineta	05 January 2023
Suciu Serban	09 January 2023
Suja Goffin Isabelle	31 January 2023
Taulegne Beatrice	09 January 2023
Thome Florence	12 January 2023
Tsirimiagos Kyriakos	09 January 2023
Van Hoeymissen Dimitri	06 January 2023
Jones Chris	12 January 2023

6.3 ANNEX 3: Transfers of appropriations

Six external transfers of appropriations have been prepared by the CoR and approved by the Budget Authority in 2022.

INF 1/2022

The purpose of this transfer was to reinforce budget item 2024 "Energy consumption" with € 345,324.

This transfer of appropriations was urgently needed in order to allow the CoR-EESC joint services to continue paying the incoming bills for the use of energy (electricity, gas) in the joint CoR-EESC buildings.

This was joint CoR/EESC expenditure for which the CoR was paying its share of the joint cost. The transfer was executed in April 2022.

INF 2/2022

The purpose of this transfer was to reinforce budget item 2024 "Energy consumption" with € 236,329.

This transfer of appropriations was urgently needed in order to allow the CoR-EESC joint services to continue paying the incoming bills for the use of energy (electricity, gas) in the CoR-EESC buildings.

This was joint CoR/EESC expenditure for which the CoR was paying its share of the joint cost. The transfer was executed in July 2022.

INF 3/2022

The purpose of this transfer was to reinforce 3 budget lines. Namely:

- item 162 "Missions" with € 50,000;
- item 214 "Technical equipment and installations" with € 100,000; and
- item 216 "Vehicles" with € 20,000.

The **total amount** of the transfer was thus € 170,000. It was executed in July 2022.

INF 4/2022

The purpose of this transfer was to reinforce 5 budget lines, namely:

- item 2022 "Cleaning and maintenance" with € 284,366;
- item 2026 "Security and surveillance of buildings" with € 42,480;
- item 2028 "Insurance" with € 4,991;
- item 2102 IT with € 450,000; and
- item 214 "Technical equipment and installations" with € 100,000.

This should allow CoR to: (i) cover the increased costs for the different **existing projects/works for the buildings' installations' maintenance and the general buildings' maintenance, security and insurance**, (ii) continue using by now well-established system of the **online streaming of CoR plenaries and statutory events**, and (iii) continue with the **progressive renovation of the meeting rooms**.

The **total amount** of the transfer was € 881,837. It was executed in November 2022.

INF 5/2022

The purpose of this transfer was to reinforce budget item 2100 "Purchase, servicing and maintenance of equipment and software, and related work" (IT).

This should allow CoR to finance the following 3 IT projects:

1. Configuration of the new IT Service Desk Tool;
2. Upgrades for equipment IT installed in meeting and training rooms, and
3. Installation of additional internal hybrid meeting rooms.

The **amount** of the transfer was € 150,000. It was executed in December 2022.

DEC 1/2022

Additional fundings would permit continuation of the successful series of Digital Masterclasses for CoR Members and staff.

The purpose of this transfer was to reinforce budget item 2602 "Web and social media and print material".

The amount of the transfer was € 198,000. It was executed in December 2022.

List of executed external transfers

Number	Item	Description	Amount
INF 1	1004	Travel and subsistence allowances, attendance at meetings and associated expenditure	-150,000
	1200	Remuneration and allowances	-195,324
	2024	Energy consumption - JS	345,324
Total			0
INF 2	1004	Travel and subsistence allowances, attendance at meetings and associated expenditure	-236,329
	2024	Energy consumption - JS	236,329
	Total		0
INF 3	1004	Travel and subsistence allowances, attendance at meetings and associated expenditure	-150,000
	1220	Allowances for staff retired in the interests of the service	-20,000
	162	Missions	50,000
	214	Technical equipment and installations - meetings	100,000
	216	Vehicles	20,000
Total			0
INF 4	1004	Travel and subsistence allowances, attendance at meetings and associated expenditure	-350,000
	1402	Interpreting services	-200,000
	1404	Seconded national experts	-90,000
	1422	Expert assistance related to consultative work - experts	-40,000
	2000	Rent - Own services - meetings	-27,550
	2022	Cleaning and maintenance - JS	284,366
	2026	Security and surveillance of buildings - JS	42,480
	2028	Insurance - Joint services	4,991
	2102	Outside assistance for the operation, development and maintenance of software systems - OS - IT - Digital strategy	450,000
	214	Technical equipment and installations - meetings	100,000
	230	Stationery, office supplies and miscellaneous consumables - JS - printing	-25,287
	2541	Third parties	-49,000
	2622	Documentation and library expenditure - OS - library	-100,000
Total			0
INF 5	1220	Allowances for staff retired in the interests of the service	-11,500

	1400	Other staff - Contractual agents	-100,000
	1630	Social welfare	-3,000
	1633	Sustainable staff commuting	-6,000
	1634	Medical service	-10,000
	2100	Purchase, servicing and maintenance of equipment and software, and related work - JS - IT	150,000
	230	Stationery, office supplies and miscellaneous consumables - OS - meetings	-3,000
	2540	Cost of meetings organized in Brussels	-16,500
Total			0
DEC 1	1220	Allowances for staff retired in the interests of the service	-43,500
	1404	Seconded national experts	-30,000
	1404	Trainees	-19,500
	1422	Expert assistance related to consultative work - experts	-60,000
	1630	Social welfare	-12,000
	1632	Internal social policy	-19,000
	1633	Sustainable staff commuting	-14,000
	2602	Web and social media and print material	198,000
Total			0

6.4 ANNEX 4: Negotiated procedures 2022

The present appendix shows, in accordance with article 74(10) FR, the list of procedures awarded in 2022 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	Procedure Lot Number	Contractor LE Name	Procedure Is Negotiated (Y/N)	Contract Local Key	User Reference	FW In Force From Date	FW Expiry Date	Procedure Negotiated Type/ Legal Basis Desc	Procedure Lot Award date	Procedure Lot Awarded Amount (Eur)
CDR.226	1	ICLEI - LOCAL GOVERNMENTS FOR SUSTAINABILITY	N	CDR.50582	RENTAL OF A COR OFFICE SPACE AT THE COP 27 IN SHARM EL-SHEIKH, EGYPT - 7-18/11/2022			Annex 1 - 11.1 (b) - Artistic/ technical reasons or exclusive rights or technical monopoly/ captive market	24-10-2022	17.112,83
CDR.159	1	INDUROPE	Y	CDR.313	ENTRETIEN EN GARANTIE TOTALE, DÉPANNAGE ET RÉPARATION DES INSTALLATIONS DE NETTOYAGE DES INSTALLATIONS DE NETTOYAGE DES FAÇADES DES BÂTIMENTS DU CESE ET DU CDR	06-01-2023	08-02-2026	Annex 1 - 11.1 (a) - Follow-up of an open/restricted procedure where no (or no suitable) tenders/requests to participate have been submitted	09-02-2022	775.439,37

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

Article 116 of the Financial Regulation⁸ (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 European 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 1/01/2007) 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.

⁸ 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)

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 suspensions of time-limits
	Number	Amounts		
2013	1.820	31.123.497	18,85	124
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

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 2009⁹ in order to improve the financial situation of undertakings, particularly in this period of crisis.

In 2022 CoR processed and paid the highest number of commercial invoices. Consequently, the average time for payment has slightly increased compared to the previous year.

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 2022 for the total of EUR 305,24 (case where the amount of default interest exceeds the threshold of EUR 200 defined in Article 116(5) FR).

⁹ Communication of the Commission of 8 April 2009 on streamlining financial rules and accelerating budget implementation to help economic recovery (SEC (2009) 477 final).

6.6 ANNEX 6: Provisional Annual Accounts 2022

BALANCE SHEET

EUR

	Note	31.12.2022	31.12.2021
NON-CURRENT ASSETS			
<i>Intangible assets</i>	2.1	3.107	6.122
<i>Property, plant and equipment</i>	2.2	50.980.794	53.261.191
<i>Exchange receivables and non-exchange recoverables</i>		9.507	
		50.993.408	53.267.313
CURRENT ASSETS			
<i>Exchange receivables and non-exchange recoverables</i>	2.3	9.185.493	8.837.846
<i>Cash and cash equivalents</i>	2.4	746.501	1.582.346
			10.420.192
TOTAL ASSETS		60.925.403	63.687.506
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES			
<i>Financial liabilities</i>	2.5	-30.760.955	-38.784.137
		-30.760.955	-38.784.137
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
<i>Financial liabilities</i>	2.5	-4.597.343	-4.024.609
<i>Payables</i>	2.6	-2.816.369	-366.100
<i>Accrued charges and deferred income</i>	2.7	-6.420.121	-7.886.171
		-13.833.832	-12.276.880
TOTAL LIABILITIES		-44.594.787	-51.061.018
NET ASSETS			
		16.330.616	12.626.488
<i>Accumulated surplus</i>		12.626.488	13.207.369
<i>Economic result of the year</i>		3.704.128	-580.881
NET ASSETS		16.330.616	12.626.488

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

EUR

	Note	2022	2021
REVENUE			
Revenue from non-exchange transactions			
<i>Funding from the Commission</i>	3.1	95.700.000	89.818.635
<i>Other revenue</i>	3.1	11.236.878	10.515.029
		106.936.878	100.333.664
Revenue from exchange transactions			
<i>Operations with the consolidated entities</i>	3.2	2.411.515	815.216
<i>Other revenue</i>	3.2	4.519.943	118.118
		6.931.458	933.334
Total revenue		113.868.336	101.266.998
EXPENSES			
<i>Staff costs</i>	3.3	-63.826.459	-61.157.830
<i>Finance costs</i>	3.4	-4.124.685	-4.192.754
<i>Other expenses</i>	3.5	-42.213.064	-36.497.295
Total expenses		-110.164.209	-101.847.879
ECONOMIC RESULT OF THE YEAR		3.704.128	-580.881

CASHFLOW STATEMENT

EUR

	2022	2021
<i>Economic result of the year</i>	3.704.1288	-580.881
Operating activities		
<i>Amortisation and impairments - intangible fixed assets</i>	3.015	29.292
<i>Depreciation and impairments - property, plant and equipment</i>	3.444.065	3.472.532
<i>(Increase)/decrease in exchange receivables and non-exchange recoverables</i>	-357.155	495.521
<i>Increase/(decrease) in financial liabilities</i>	-7.450.449	-3.788.411
<i>Increase/(decrease) in payables</i>	2.450.269	-1.003.858
<i>Increase/(decrease) in accrued charges and deferred revenue</i>	-1.466.051	2.256.754
Investing activities		
<i>(Increase)/decrease in intangible assets and property, plant and equipment</i>	-1.163.668	-606.419
NET CASHFLOW	-835.846	274.529
<i>Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents</i>	-835.846	274.529
<i>Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year</i>	1.582.346	1.307.818
<i>Cash and cash equivalents at year-end</i>	746.501	1.582.346

STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN NET ASSETS

EUR

	Accumulated Surplus/(Deficit)	Economic result of the year	Net Assets
BALANCE AS AT 31.12.2020	15.638.361	-2.430.992	13.207.369
<i>Allocation 2019 economic result</i>	-2.430.992	2.430.992	0
<i>Economic result of the year</i>		-580.881	-580.881
BALANCE AS AT 31.12.2021	13.207.369	-580.881	12.626.488
<i>Allocation 2020 economic result</i>	-580.881	580.881	0
<i>Economic result of the year</i>		3.704.128	3.704.128
BALANCE AS AT 31.12.2022	12.626.488	3.704.128	16.330.616

6.7 ANNEX 7: Human Resources figures of the European Committee of the Regions estimates for 2023

Type	AD	AST	AST/SC	Total
Establishment plan	306	178	12	496 (posts)
Contract staff (1)	18	32	0	50 (people)
External contract staff	n/a	n/a	n/a	49 (people)
Seconded national experts	13			13 (people)
Other personnel (specify) (2)	1			1 (people)
Total	338	210	12	609

(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				
Other personnel (specify)				
Total	7	4	0	11

EPP Group Secretariat

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

PES Group Secretariat

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

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

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

ECR Group Secretariat

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

The Greens Group Secretariat

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

Secretary General's Cabinet

Type	SG	AD	AST	AST/SC	Total
Establishment plan	1	4	5		10
Contract staff		1			1
External contract staff		n/a	n/a	n/a	
Seconded national experts		1			1
Other personnel (specify)					
Total	1	6	5	0	12

Legal Affairs

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

Internal Audit Service

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

Directorate A

Type	AD	AST	AST/SC	Total
Establishment plan	19	25	2	46
Contract staff		16		16
External contract staff	n/a	n/a	n/a	3
Seconded national experts	1			1
Other personnel (specify)				
Total	20	41	2	66

Directorate B

Type	AD	AST	AST/SC	Total
Establishment plan	31	14		45
Contract staff	2	1		3
External contract staff	n/a	n/a	n/a	2
Seconded national experts	4			4
Other personnel (specify)				
Total	37	15	0	54

Directorate C

Type	AD	AST	AST/SC	Total
Establishment plan	28	9	3	40
Contract staff	2			2
External contract staff	n/a	n/a	n/a	1
Seconded national experts	3			3
Other personnel (specify)				
Total	33	9	3	46

Directorate D

Type	AD	AST	AST/SC	Total
Establishment plan	26	18	2	46
Contract staff	5	4		9
External contract staff	n/a	n/a	n/a	11
Seconded national experts	3			3
Other personnel (specify)				
Total	34	22	2	69

Directorate E

Type	AD	AST	AST/SC	Total
Establishment plan	21	46	2	69
Contract staff	1			1
External contract staff	n/a	n/a	n/a	2
Seconded national experts	1			1
Other personnel (specify)	1			1
Total	24	46	2	74

Directorate for Translation (CoR staff only)

Type	AD	AST	AST/SC	Total
Establishment plan	118	22	3	143
Contract staff	1			1
External contract staff	n/a	n/a	n/a	
Seconded national experts				
Other personnel (specify)				
Total	119	22	3	144

Directorate for 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	6		14
Contract staff	3	1		4
External contract staff	n/a	n/a	n/a	30
Seconded national experts				
Other personnel (specify)				
Total	11	7	0	48

Public Procurement and Financial Management

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

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	0	2	0	2

6.8 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.

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.

It should be noted here that, in 2016, the European Commission secretary-general informed the Committees that the Administrative Agreement on renting the VMA would not be extended beyond February 2019, and that the Commission intended to demolish the building after that date and to build a new one solely for its own use. Following negotiations, that Administrative Agreement was finally extended until the end of 2021, but no arrangement was made for further use of this building by the Committees beyond that year.

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].

NEED FOR A NEW BUILDING

Exchanging the B68 and TRE buildings for the VMA, however, results in a significant loss of office space for the two Committees (10 440 m²)^[2], which cannot 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 early 2021 would enable the Committees to accommodate some of the staff vacating the VMA building during the refurbishment works planned between summer 2021 and summer 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, the Bureaus of the two Committees mandated the secretaries-general in February 2020 to undertake negotiations with the EEAS in view of concluding an agreement enabling the Committees to take over the rental contract of B100 as from early 2021.

The negotiations started in March 2020, with the initial aim of being concluded before summer 2020. Nevertheless, the COVID-19 crisis caused a major delay in the works of another building that the EEAS intended to occupy at the beginning of 2021 and as a consequence the services housed in the B100 building could only move out in August 2021. In its letter dated 12 November 2020, the EEAS informed the Committees that the takeover of the rental contract of the B100 building could only take effect on 1 September 2021.

The draft Administrative Agreement with the EEAS for the takeover of the lease of the Belliard 100 building was approved by the Bureau of the European Economic and Social Committee on 15 September 2020 and by the Bureau of the Committee of the Regions on 9 October 2020.

On 18 March 2021, the Committees referred the matter to the budgetary authority in order to seek its opinion on the financial aspects of this takeover in application of Article 266 of the Financial Regulation (references CESE (2021) D/505 Official registration n° (2021) D/199 and CoR (2021) D/430 Official registration n° (2021) D/352).

The European Parliament has approved this request on 10 May 2021, confirmed by its letter EP(2021)012506 of 1 June 2021. The European Council did not take a decision contrary to the project by 16 April 2021 and therefore it was deemed approved by the Council.

Following the exchange of buildings with the Commission, savings compared to 2019 will begin to appear from the beginning of 2023, due to the lower cost of renting the entire VMA compared to the three buildings currently being

paid for (B68, T74 and partially the VMA): these savings will be sufficient to cover the rent of B100.

For 2021 and 2022, i.e. before the exchange of buildings, the rent for the B100 building represented an additional one-off cost for both Committees compared to 2020.

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.

NEED TO REFURBISH 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 as soon as possible (2021-2022) in order to function properly in the coming years. It should be noted that if the building exchanges did not happen, the Committees would still have had to refurbish the B68 and TRE74 in more or less the same period as these two buildings are also quite old.

The estimated budget for the VMA’s refurbishment works from the third to the ninth floor was EUR 6 to 9 million. The main part of this budget for the renovation works of the VMA (around EUR 6 million) was already available in the initial 2021 budget approved by the budgetary authority as a “one off” request for the year 2021. In addition, it was possible to save appropriations for an amount of 3 million from budget lines 2001 and 2000 as well as from other projects on budget line 2007 and to use them for the VMA refurbishment.

On 21 April 2021 in their joint yearly report on Buildings^[3] in application of article 266 of the Financial Regulation, the European Economic and Social Committee and the European Committee of the Regions confirmed and extended their early warning to the budgetary authority, which had already been notified through a letter dated 24 May 2019 sent to Mr Arthuis and through the Buildings Report sent on 29 May 2020, to the Budgetary Authority:

- the need to refurbish the VMA building,
- the launch of a call for tenders in spring 2021 for the renovation works for the VMA building, to be undertaken between September 2021 and September 2022, for an estimated amount of up to EUR 9 million.

The renovation works of the VMA building have been explained to European Parliament’s Committee on Budget at its meeting on 10 May 2021.

On 28 October 2021, the Committees referred the matter to the budgetary authority in order to seek its approval on the financial aspects of this renovation in application of Article 266 of the Financial Regulation (references CESE (2021) D/2660 Official registration n° 850 and CoR (2021) D/2035 Official registration n° 1253).

The European Parliament has approved this request on 18 November 2021, confirmed by its letter with reference EP(2021)308595 of 7 December 2021.

The European Council did not take a decision contrary to the project by 26 November 2021 and therefore it was deemed approved by the Council.

The 1 December 2021 the tender for the renovation works has been awarded and a few days after the framework contracts has been signed as well as the specific contracts for the works for a total amount of 9 Mio€:

- the main renovation, including new sanitary facilities, showers and lounge area for EESC members for a total amount of 6,25 MIO€;
- three technical options for a total amount of 2,75 MIO€:
 1. modernise the work environment by installing glass partitions
 2. allow 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,
 3. measures to limit energy and water consumption (EMAS/ Green Deal objectives).

The total budget that was committed in 2021 and 2022 to this renovation project of the third until the ninth floor by both Committees is of EUR 9.54 million.

Since December 2021, the office floors (3rd to 9th) of the VMA building have been going through a complete renovation. They have been 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 trough 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 have been 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 has been 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.

New passageway between the European Parliament and the Committees

In November 2022, the second physical connection to EP's buildings became operational, offering a more direct, easier and 125 m shorter pathway between the Committees' BvS building (5th floor) and the EP's Zweig building.

Energy crisis

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 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.

LIFT OF PURCHASE OPTIONS

In their letter 001071-01909 dated 11 December 2014, the European Economic and Social Committee and the European Committee of the Regions informed the budgetary authority of their intention to lift the purchase option provided in the long-term leasehold contracts for five buildings occupied jointly, namely:

- JDE building, on Rue Belliard 99-101, 1040 Brussels
- BvS building, on Rue Montoyer 92-102, 1000, Brussels
- B68 building, on Rue Belliard 68, 1000, Brussels
- TRE building, on Rue de Trèves 74, 1000, Brussels
- REM building, on Rue Belliard 93, 1000, Brussels

The budgetary and financial cost of acquiring the residual property rights is a symbolic sum of EUR 1 per building, this being the price under the contracts for the exercise of the purchase options, to which the indirect costs of legal services and notarial fees have to be added.

It is also important to note that exercising the purchase option will not change the financial conditions set out in the long-term leasehold contracts. The European Economic and Social Committee and the European Committee of the Regions will still have to continue paying the annual leasehold fees in accordance with the contracts for the remainder of their term.

The option to purchase the JDE building was exercised with the signing of the deed on 19 November 2018.

The option to purchase the BvS and REM buildings was exercised with the signing of both deeds on 9 December 2019.

As the Committees swapped the B68 and TRE buildings for the VMA building in September 2022, the exercise of the

purchase options of the B68 and TRE buildings will have to be carried out by the Commission in due time.

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 enter 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 state of play 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 2022.

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 2022.

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 2023 (€)
A02001	Annual lease payments				
	OFFICE SPACE	JDE	22,026	Emphyteusis with option to buy (exercised in 2018)	7.670.755
		BVS	18,281	Emphyteusis with option to buy (exercised in 2019)	6.429.055
		REM	2,324	Emphyteusis with option to buy (exercised in 2019)	274.876
		VMA	11,094	Emphyteusis with option to buy, not yet exercised	3.254.530
	Subtotal office space		53,725		17.629.216
	NON-OFFICE SPACE	JDE	14,353		4.998.563
		BVS	2,285		803.588
		REM	0		0
		VMA	5,216		1.530.163
	Subtotal non-office space		21,854		7.332.314
TOTAL LINE			75,579		24.961.529
A02000	Rent				
	OFFICE SPACE	B100	5,827	Rent	1.608.488
	Subtotal office space		5,827		1.608.488
	NON-OFFICE SPACE	B100	0		0
	Subtotal non-office space		0		0
TOTAL LINE			5,827		1.608.3488
GRAND TOTALS			81,406		26.570.017
	Share of office space in total space (%)		73.2%		
	Share of non-office space in total space (%)		26.8%		
	Employees to be accommodated		1,485		
	Office space / employee (m ²)		40,1		

[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.

6.9 ANNEX 9: Activities of the members of the CoR in 2022¹⁰

Statutory meetings

Number	Title	Place
5	Plenary Sessions	Brussels
1	SummitFrance (Marseille)	
1	External Bureau meeting	Czech Republic (Prague)
2	Extraordinary Conference of Presidents	Poland (Rzeszów), Czech Republic (Prague)
22	Commission meetings	Brussels, Hybrid, Remote
6	External Commission meetings	Various Member States
6	Commissions for administrative & financial affairs	1 Hybrid, 5 Brussels
6	Meetings of the political groups outside Brussels	Various Member States
2	Extraordinary meetings of the political groups in Brussels	Brussels
1	Meeting of the Working Group on relations with Türkiye	Brussels
2	Meetings of the Working Group Western Balkans	Brussels, Kosovo
2	Meetings of the JCC North Macedonia	Brussels, North Macedonia
2	Meetings of the JCC Serbia	Brussels, Serbia
1	Meeting of the JCC Montenegro	Brussels
1	Enlargement Day	Hybrid
2	Meetings of the Working Group Ukraine	Brussels
2	Meetings of the CoR-UK Contact Group	United Kingdom, Brussels
3	Meetings of the Working Group Green Deal Going Local	Remote, Brussels

Thematic and other political activities

16	Seminars/Study visits organised by commission secretariats	Various Members States
23	Seminars/conferences organised by commission secretariats	Brussels
1	Seminar organised by political groups	Brussels
5	Seminars organised by political groups outside Brussels	The Netherlands, Romania, Morocco, Poland, Slovakia
1	ARLEM plenary session	Hybrid (Türkiye)
1	ARLEM commission	Hybrid (Brussels)
1	CORLEAP Annual meeting	Czech Republic

Various

1	European Week of regions and Cities	Brussels
1	EUROPCOM	Brussels
1	Conference "European democracy, citizens' participation and the role of regions and cities"	Brussels
15	CoR delegation to the Conference on the Future of Europe	1 Remote, 13 hybrids (Strasbourg), Strasbourg
43	Local events	Various Members States

¹⁰ 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 2022

Country	City/Region	Topics	Date	CoR members involved
Germany & Czech Republic	Brno (CZ), Leipzig (D) & Stuttgart (D)	BsT 21 - Twin town and cross-border citizens' dialogue to shape a sustainable Europe for future generations	27-01-22	Joshua Frey (Greens)
Online	Region Danube-Vltava (EDM) from the Upper Palatinate to Lower Austria	BsT 7 - Connected Border Regions - Impacts and Challenges of the Pandemic on cross-border mobility between Austria, Czech Republic and Germany	28-01-22	Martin Eichtinger (EPP)
Online	Brussels	Closing CoR/BsT event February	15-02-22	Apostolos Tzitzikostas (president) Kata Tüttö (PES) Mark Speich (EPP)
Austria	Vorarlberg	Zukunftcafé Europa	24-02-22	Harald Sonderreger (EPP)
Austria	Friedensburg Schlaining	KONFERENZ ZUR ZUKUNFT EUROPAS UND DEM EUROPÄISCHEN JAHR DER JUGEND	25-02-22	Hans-Peter Doskozil (PES) Heinrich Dorner (PES)
Spain	Navarra	Hablemos de Europa - gira por Navarra	02-03-22	Sergio Perez Garcia (EA)
Czech Republic	Liberec	THE FUTURE OF CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION - Pavel Branda	23-03-22	Pavel Branda (ECR)
Poland	Gdansk	Europe: let's do it together! Vol. 2 - European Year of Youth 2022 - M Struk	23-03-22	Mieczysław Struk (EPP) Aleksandra Dulciewicz (EPP)
Austria	Kärnten	Dialog 1 – Jugend, Bildung und Forschung – Herausforderungen und Perspektiven	25-03-22	Peter Kaiser (PES)
France	Coulaines	Comment construire la souveraineté européenne ?	01-04-22	Christophe Rouillon (PES)
Hungary	Pecs	Debate competition	09-04-22	József Kóbor (EA)
Czech Republic	Brno	Local dialogue on the European Year of Youth and Cohesion	12-04-22	Apostolos Tzitzikostas (president) Radim Srsen (EPP)
Poland	Warsaw	Conference on the future of Europe on the agricultural sector	20-04-22	Adam Struzik (EPP) Gustav Marek Brzezina (EPP)
Italy		Mens sana in corpore sano	21-04-22	Donatella Porzi (Renew)
Austria	Karnten	Dialog 2 – Jugend, Bildung und Forschung – Herausforderungen und Perspektiven	28-04-22	Peter Kaiser (PES)
Austria	Bad St. Leonhard	Dialog 3 – Jugend, Bildung und Forschung – Herausforderungen und Perspektiven	02-05-22	Peter Kaiser (PES)
Czech Republic	Moravian-Silesian region	Youth for Just Transition in Moravian-Silesian region	04-05-22	Zdeněk Karásek (Renew)
France	Strasbourg	Dialogue on youth participation in democratic debate	09-05-22	Apostolos Tzitzikostas (president)

Italy	Lucca	Nice to Meet EU - I giovani dialogano sull'Europa del futuro	09-05-22	Luca Menesini (PES)
Italy		Re-start Europa: Siderno con i giovani per il futuro	13-05-22	Giuseppe Varacalli (Renew)
Romania	Cluj	Europe unfolds in Transylvania: Building on democracy, education and youth	18-05-22	Apostolos Tzitzikostas (president) Emil Boc (EPP)
Germany	Monschau	Living Europe in a border community - experiences, perspectives and wishes of the citizens - Speich-Lambertz	24-05-22	Mark Speich (EPP) Karl-Heinz Lambertz (PES)
Estonia	Rakvere	It is time to speak - Climate-neutral Rakvere 2050	27-05-22	Andres Jaadla (Renew) Rait Pihelgas (Renew) Jüri Gotmans (PES) Jan Trei (EPP)
Sweden	Göteborg	Shaping Europe's future together in our regions	08-06-22	Apostolos Tzitzikostas (president)
Ireland	Dublin	Local dialogue on Youth and Democracy	16-06-22	Michael Murphy (EPP)
Online		BsT 12 - Europe's interface: Border Regions talking Nahtstellen Europas: Grenzregionen im Gespräch	18-06-22	Katja Meier (Greens)
Belgium	Brussels	Closing CoR/BsT event June	27-06-22	Apostolos Tzitzikostas (president) Vasco Alves Cordeiro (First Vice-President) Christophe Rouillon (PES) Jelena Drenjanin (EPP) Kieran McCarthy (EA) Francois Decoster (Renew)
Slovakia	Presov Region	Youth and the Future of Europe	08-09-22	Miloslav Repasky (EA) Karl Vanlouwe (EA) Dariusz Strugala (EA) Emil Draghici (EA) Cosmina Pandele (EA) Krzysztof Iwaniuk (EA) Miroslaw Lech (EA)
Spain	Cantabria	Local dialogue about youth and rural environment	24-09-22	Paula Fernandez Viana (Renew)
France/Belgium	Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region office in Brussels	4 MOTORS FOR EUROPE AS KEY ENABLERS OF INDUSTRIAL GREEN TRANSITION - THE CASE OF AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY (EURegionsWeek side event)	11-10-22	Florian Hassler (Greens)
Spain/Belgium	Mancomunitat de l'Horta Sud	Sustainable mobility in municipalities as a means of combating climate change (EURegionsWeek side event)	11-10-22	Ximo Puig (PES)

Belgium	Brussels	Mainstreaming Digital Youth Policy (EURegionsWeek side event)	11-10-22	Tine Radinja (Greens)
Croatia/Belgium	Dubrovnik - Neretva Region	The Mediterranean - why we need a Macroregional strategy (EURegionsWeek side event)	13-10-22	Dobroslavić Nikola (EPP) Marco Marsilio (ECR)
Romania/ Belgium	Brussels	Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans for Small Towns, A Means To Wean Off Foreign Oil Dependency (EURegionsWeek side event)	13-10-22	Adrian Teban (EPP) Linda Gaasch (Greens)
Virtual	Brussels	Smart specialisation and ERA Hubs: a new and winning combination? (EURegionsWeek side event)	13-10-22	Markku Markkula (EPP) Christophe Clergeau (PES)
Belgium	Brussels	The Future of Cohesion: EU Regions and the Twin Transition (EURegionsWeek side event)	13-10-22	Mark Speich (EPP)
Virtual	Aarhus University, Ecologic Institute, European Forest Institute, University of Sheffield	Sustaining Cities, Naturally: Urban ecosystem restoration in Europe, China & Latin-America (EURegionsWeek side event)	13-10-22	Adrian Teban (EPP)
Belgium	Brussels	How to facilitate Circular Economy Transition? Capitalization of cooperation experiences and tools (EURegionsWeek side event)	14-10-22	Roberto Ciambetti (ECR) Markku Markkula (EPP)
Belgium	Mechelen	Resourceful Cities, circular transition stories from 9 European cities (EURegionsWeek side event)	19-10-22	Kieran McCarthy (EA)
Italy	Milan	Enhancing Territorial Cohesion via Capacity Building Projects for Small Municipalities	20-10-22	Carmine Pacente (Renew)
Finland	Oulu	Empowering the youth community in Oulu	03-11-22	Mirja Vehkaperä (Renew)
Romania	Miercurea Ciuc, Harghita County/Brussels	The Future of Talents – Actors of the future of Europe (EURegionsWeek side event)	07-11-22	Csaba Borboly (EPP)
Austria	Innsbruck	The Making of Europe	16-11-22	Günther Platter (EPP) François Decoster (Renew) Mark Speich (EPP)

6.10 ANNEX 10 - Follow-up to the EP Plenary discharge resolution covering the budget implementation year 2021

Follow-up to EP Plenary discharge decision

Nr.	Resolution text	Follow-up by the CoR
A	Whereas the Committee of the Regions (the 'Committee') is a political assembly of 329 members elected from the regions, cities, villages and municipalities of the 27 Member States, 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 2024 includes 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.
B	Whereas the consultation of the Committee by the Commission or the Council is mandatory in certain cases, while 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;	
C	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 ^[1] , and whereas the Committee adopted three political priorities for its 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 EU;	
D	Whereas the 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 the legislation, improves ownership and pursues more effectively 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 includes 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.
E	Whereas the Committee pursues its political goal to strengthen its involvement in the entire Union political and legislative cycle while making more tangible the connection with Union citizens using the Committee's members as powerful multipliers in their communities and in their national associations of local and regional authorities;	
F	Whereas the Committee identified nine flagship initiatives and followed them up in 2021 to make its action more strategic and impactful: (1) Recovery and Resilience Facility, (2) Health related COVID-19 response, (3) The Action Plan for the Implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, (4) CoR4Climate Pact, (5) The future of cross-border cooperation, (6) The New Pact for Migration and Integration, (7) Conference on the Future of Europe, (8) Long-term vision for Rural Areas, and (9) a Strategic CoR's Budget – ensuring a fair share of the resources for the Committee;	

G	Whereas Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 ^[2] , governing Union cohesion policy and funding between 2021 and 2027, that entered into force in July 2021, encompasses references to the partnership and multilevel governance principle, supported by the Committee and Parliament and entailing the involvement of regions;	
H	Whereas the over four hundred national and regional programmes in place for the delivery of Union cohesion policy in the 2021-2027 programming period will make available around EUR 380 billion, under different funds, to tackle the economic, social and environmental challenges that Union regions and cities are facing;	
I	Whereas, on 13 February 2021, Regulation (EU) 2021/241 ^[3] , establishing the Union's Recovery and Resilience Facility, entered into force, providing the legal basis for distributing funds and loans of up to EUR 672,5 billion (in 2018 prices) to the Member States between 2021 and 2026 while aiming to support, among other things, economic, social and territorial cohesion and to address disparities between the regions of the Union;	
J	Whereas, as a 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	
K	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;	
1	Notes that the budget of the Committee falls under MFF heading 7, 'European public administration', which amounted to a total of EUR 10,7 billion in 2021 (representing 5,9 % of Union spending);	
2	Notes that the Court of Auditors (the 'Court') in its Annual Report for the financial year 2021 increased its sample of transactions under Administration from 48 in 2020 to 60 in 2021;	See remark to item 4
3	Notes that the Court mentions that the work carried out over many years indicates that MFF heading 7 concerns an overall low-risk spending; notes, however, that the annual Report on the implementation of the budget for the 2021 financial year does not provide any relevant information on the Committee and invites the Court to include in its next annual reports comprehensive data regarding the completion of all requirements necessary for a consistent discharge procedure;	
4	Notes with satisfaction that in the annual report for the financial year 2021, the Court did not identify any specific issues concerning the Committee;	The CoR is fully committed to keep the good level of administration, the compliance with the principle of the sound financial management and even further improve it.

	BUDGETARY AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT	
5	Notes that the final budget of the Committee for 2021 was EUR 106 740 880, representing a slight increase of 5,15 % compared to EUR 101 508 480 in 2020 and from EUR 98 751 065 in 2019; observes that, as expressed in last year's discharge resolution, the most important budget lines were those for remuneration and allowances, followed by rent and lease of buildings, IT equipment and software, and then allowances, attendance at meetings and associated expenditure and interpreting services;	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.
6	Observes the high budget implementation of 98,9 %, compared to 92,7 % in 2020, closer to the pre-pandemic levels of 2019 and 2018 of 99,6 % and 99,3 % respectively, and notes that the payment rate on 31 December 2021 was 85,1 %, improved from 82,4 % in 2020 but still lower than 88,8 % and 91 % in 2019 and 2018 respectively; underlines that the average payment time in 2021 was 16,11 days, which was an improvement on 2020 (17,21 days) and on 2019 (17.23 days); notes that the use of electronic invoices is still not satisfactory, amounting to only 32 % of all invoices in 2021, which represents an increase compared to 29 % in 2020, but a decrease compared to 33 % in 2019;	The CoR yearly budget outturn has increased further in 2022 reaching 99,2% . The payment rate of current appropriations (C1 2022) has also increased further reaching 88% at the end of 2022. The very high execution rate over years is the result of the CoR's budget planning and execution optimisation From 1 April 2022 the CoR stopped accepting invoices received in pdf format. Since then, the number of suppliers sending electronic invoices has significantly increased reaching the 68% of all commercial invoices registered in 2022 were electronic.
7	Notes the increase in payments from 2020 to 2021, both years of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is related to the increased level of activities carried out in 2021, when additional investment in the IT sector allowed for more extensive use of videoconferencing facilities for virtual and hybrid meetings (in comparison to 2020), thus avoiding cancelling or postponing events despite that fact the restrictions imposed as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic were still in place	
8	Remarks that a surplus of EUR 11 198 492 was carried over from 2021 to 2022, slightly less than in 2020 and much higher than in 2019 (when respectively EUR 11 708 078 and EUR 8 874 776 were carried over); observes that EUR 1,1 million was uncommitted at the end of 2021 and was thus returned to the Union budget, which is considerably less than in 2020, when approximately EUR 7,4 million remained uncommitted, bringing the current figure closer to the pre-pandemic levels (in 2019 EUR 0,4 million was uncommitted); encourages the Committee to continue enhancing the monitoring and management of the available appropriations;	The CoR yearly budget outturn has increased further in 2022: an amount of EUR 0.8 million (or 0.8% of the CoR 2022 budget) was uncommitted at the end of 2022 and was thus returned to the Union budget. Regular monitoring and follow-up of the CoR Budget execution is ensured on several levels via regular monitoring and reporting to the management and financial actors, among others, by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • regular use of the "BudgetWatch" – a further enhanced Excel based analytical-monitoring budget execution tool; • monthly budget execution notes; • monthly estimates of the execution of the salary-related appropriations; • quarterly in-depth budget execution reviews, including for carried-over appropriations; • use of different operation's adjusted specific monitoring/ reporting tools on a decentralised level. The results are reported to the management and form a base for further discussions on the optimisation of the budget execution for the current year and reprioritisation of expenditure if and where needed. These discussions may result, among others, in the roadmap for the transfers of appropriations (internal and external) that are carried out throughout the year. The results of the quarterly reviews and roadmap for the possible reallocation of resources is then further discussed with the CoR political representatives in the Committee for Financial and Administrative Affairs (CFAA).

9	Notes that, in 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on the Committee's activity, meaning that there was a reduction in the use of appropriations for certain budget lines (meeting and travel and subsistence allowances, interpretations, missions and building running costs), while for others the health crisis required additional expenditure (medical services and IT and videoconferencing projects); observes that, accordingly, savings were estimated to amount to more than EUR 8 million, compared to savings of EUR 11 million in the 2020 financial year;	
10	Remarks that, in order to optimise the use of appropriations, the Committee made budget transfers representing a total of EUR 8,7 million in 2021 (8,2 %), compared to EUR 6,6 million in 2020 (6,5 %), and that those transfers were mainly from the domains where substantial savings were made to the domains that needed reinforcement (IT, communication and external expertise); underlines that seven external transfers of appropriations were prepared by the Committee and approved by the budget authority in 2021; observes that the Committee did not have one specific mopping up transfer at the end of the year;	This is necessary as the CoR, as smallest EU institution, has not enough budget for all its activities and needs basically every euro. The CoR draws the Parliament's attention to the fact of its chronic and structural underfinancing affecting the CoR's capability to fulfil its Treaty functions and hampering the implementation of modernization projects requested by the European Parliament. To address this, the CoR has included the project «Tapping into the regional and local authorities' potential to strengthen the EU» in the CoR DB 2024 as a separate envelope and counts on the European Parliament's support in this regard.
11	Is aware that tender procedures concerning the Committee are organised either by its own services or on behalf of the Committee by the joint services shared by the Committee and the European Economic and Social Committee (the 'EESC'); observes that in 2021, in comparison to previous years, the Committee's own services handled an unprecedented number of high-value open procedures, which resulted in the signature of a record number of multiannual framework contracts in the course of that year; remarks that in the same timeframe, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of low- and middle-value negotiated procedures related to organisation of activities or events remained lower than usual with roughly half of the procedures foreseen in the 2021 work programme having to be cancelled; notes that the procedures concerned were related to planned commission and political group meetings which went from a hybrid format to a fully remote format;	
	INTERNAL MANAGEMENT, PERFORMANCE, INTERNAL CONTROL	
12	Understands that, in 2021, the main challenges for the Committee were related to the need to fully adapt to the new circumstances that arose as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, and that this situation included a widespread lack of resources and the need to adapt IT resources to support the digitalisation process; acknowledges the collective efforts of all parties involved which allowed continuous support to be provided to the political activities of the Committee, ensuring that activities continued to be carried out via remote meetings and via communication platforms such as Agora and KIKLOS, while guaranteeing the health and safety of the Committee's members and staff; welcomes the setting up of a series of task forces entrusted with tackling cross service issues, such as the need for simplifying the Committee's processes, for reinforcing strategic planning and for digitalising its procedures;	According to the «Going for Impact!» plan, priority areas for cross-service work were identified and task forces formed that help to boost the CoR's impact. Management and staff is regularly informed about their progress. The topics which are covered are not set in stone and depend on changing and new occurring needs. The current task active task forces include the topics of strategic planning; simplification of administrative environment; the green deal going local; 2024 preparations: European elections, CoR summit and 30th anniversary; Better Regulation and the Fit4Future Platform and Ukraine. The following task forces have been closed after the successful achievements of its goals: COVID-19 Action Plan; Financial Management; Electronic Workflows & XML; Digital Strategy and Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE);

13	Notes that the Committee pursues its mission through opinions, which refer to legislative proposals made by the Commission (referrals), and own-initiative opinions, which call on the Union institutions to take action, and that the Committee's positions can be highlighted in resolutions; observes that, in 2021, the Committee adopted referrals, opinions on own initiative and opinions based on Union documents and resolutions for a total of 69 documents, compared to 56 and 55 adopted in 2020 and 2019 respectively; notes that the Committee published studies and reports on specific issues, such as the second edition of the EU annual regional and local Barometer report on the state of Union regions and cities, and carried out outreach to more than one million elected regional and local politicians via the Committee's 'Regional and Local EU Councillors' campaign that coordinated networks such as the RegHub 2.0 network as part of the Fit-for-Future Platform for better regulation, and notes that, in 2021, the Committee held more than 200 conferences and events while communicating its work through relevant channels and tools;	The 2022 edition of the EU annual regional and local Barometer (called EU Annual Report on the state of regions and cities) consolidated the exercise as a reference point for regional and local authorities across Europe, generating remarkable political and media interest. The 2022 edition was accompanied by an unprecedented survey that gathered the views of local elected politicians and allowed to get their views on key EU policies that impact on local communities. The network of EU's regional and local Councillors has been consolidated and expanded in 2022, increasing at the same time synergies on common communication actions with the European Commission's pilot-project "Building Europe with Local Councillors" (BELC).
14	Observes that, in 2021, after the first year of its 2020-2025 mandate which was heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Committee met six times in plenary session (three remote and three hybrid);	
15	Notes that, in 2021, members of the Committee intervened in 42 meetings of Parliament's committees (compared to 14 in 2020 and 13 in 2019), that Members of Parliament intervened in 58 plenaries or commissions' meetings of the Committee (compared to 46 in 2020 and 62 in 2019) and that the number of times the Committee participated in Council Presidency events has remained substantially stable over the years (20 in 2021, 15 in 2020 and 22 in 2019);	A constant and steadily increased interaction with the legislative Institutions is at the very heart of the CoR activity

16	<p>Welcomes the cost-effectiveness analysis of the Committee's planning and reporting and internal control system performed in 2021, which reviewed the entire administrative environment, streamlining processes, simplifying, digitalising and profiting from the synergies between the different instruments through project convergence; notes that, in March 2021, the Committee's bureau approved the concept note for the analysis, in the following months the adaptation of each one of the instruments began, and by December 2021 the analysis of the business continuity policy and the risk management methodology was done;</p>	<p>In 2022, most of the processes entailed in the Project Convergence (Annual Operational Working Plan, Risk Management and part of the Business Continuity) were reviewed, simplified and digitalised. The revised Annual Activity Report has been finalised and the remaining elements of Business Continuity will be finalised in 2023.</p> <p>A new methodology has been established based in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-service workshops to reduce layers of coordination and decision-making; • A one-stop-shop IT tool for administrative instruments; a combined database to directly encode all the services contributions that leverages synergies by feeding information to the other administrative instruments. • A monitoring tool, integrated, that allows the follow up and management of all mitigating and implementing measures pending of all the above-mentioned administrative instruments, including a system of automatic notifications whenever a due date is approaching. <p>This new procedure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows a greener approach to our ways of working by reducing exponentially the amount of email exchanges, local saving and transference of data, reducing many layers of approval, iterations, and the heavy work of consolidation of the services contributions; • Allows a paper-free administration; • Ensures data security and accuracy; • Allows the automatic monitoring of the data and inter-annual data analysis; • Increases efficiency and reduces required FTE's. <p>For facilitating the access to and follow up of the different administrative instruments of each service, we have incorporated a Smart view page where the services can see and manage all their contributions from the same screen.</p>
17	<p>Appreciates the review and simplification of some of the internal control processes, such as the management of financial actors that took place in 2021; points out that also the IT governance model was streamlined to better allocate the limited IT resources;</p>	<p>The CoR makes continuous efforts to improve efficiency, so that its limited resources are used in the best possible way.</p> <p>In the future, if the CoR should keep up with the many challenges in the area of IT, it will need more budget allocated for this objective from the EU budgetary authorities.</p>

18	<p>Welcomes the measures adopted in 2021 in the context of the Going for IMPact! initiative, aiming to render the Committee more cost-effective and to increase its political impact; notes the multiple projects, such as the convergence project, which aims to simplify the administrative framework, and thus reduce overlaps and enhance synergies between different instruments related to planning and reporting, risk management, impact reporting and business continuity, and some internal control standards processes; supports the many (55) simplification projects defined and launched at the level of the Committee's different directorates, almost half of them fully completed in 2021 (26) and another large quota (25) approximately half completed;</p>	<p>With the aim of saving resources that could be used for activities that generate or enlarge the CoR's impact, a thorough analysis was done, in the context of the Convergence project, on the administrative processes related to Planning and Reporting, Impact Reporting, Risk Management, Business continuity and some aspects of Internal Control. All these processes were streamlined and digitalised.</p> <p>Given the success in the simplification and digitalisation of the above-mentioned processes, further administrative processes have been simplified and digitalised in 2022 and will continue to be digitalised in 2023 within the same platform, such as Monitoring of mitigating measures related to Exception Reports and mitigating measures related to Ex-Post reports or the management of the Register of Procedures.</p> <p>In addition to that, in the context of the Going for Impact initiative, further 73 simplification projects were launched in 2021, of which 43 projects have been fully completed and other 30 are ongoing. In this sense, results are expected in the mid and longer term with the reduction of risks of human errors and time savings allowing the reallocation of staff to higher-value and more rewarding activities.</p>
19	<p>Appreciates that the plenary of the Conference on the Future of Europe (the 'COFE'), composed of 449 delegates, included 18 representatives of the Committee and 12 locally and regionally elected politicians, considering that the initial number proposed was only four representatives of the Committee and that this number was increased following a proposal by the Committee; notes that this significant participation in the context of the COFE allowed the Committee to organise 6 high-level events, 60 local events, 63 events at the European Week of Regions and Cities and 7 events for the Young Elected Politicians Programme, reaching more than 10 000 citizens, local politicians and stakeholders; underlines that in the multilingual digital platform of the COFE, the Committee submitted 44 ideas with key messages from adopted opinions in the context of the COFE's nine main topics and that many of the views expressed in those ideas can be found in the COFE's Report on the final outcome; further encourages the Committee to assist its members in participating in local dialogues with citizens on European matters;</p>	<p>The CoR Bureau invited last November 2022 every Member to hold at least one dialogue in their constituency every year. Following the call, the administration offered targeted presentations in the margins of CoR Plenary sessions to strengthen the uptake of the currently available support mechanisms for organising local dialogues and events. Local events and dialogues are a key part of "A new Chapter for EU Democracy" as mentioned in the CoR communication plan for 2023 adopted by the CoR Bureau on 7 February, as well as a critical component of the CoR strategy ahead of the European elections. Furthermore, the CoR President has issued a letter in March 2023 to all CoR members, underlining the importance of local dialogues in view of the upcoming Europe Day. The letter was accompanied by information on the available support mechanisms. Red tape has been cut to simplify support procedures. Furthermore, a capacity building programme, carried out together with the Bertelsmann Foundation, will begin in the second half of 2023. The programme aims to support CoR members, YEPs and EU local and regional councillors in establishing and fine-tuning citizen engagement mechanisms.</p> <p>Finally, one further benefit of CoFE cooperation is that there is now an established «Political Caucus» methodology for working with sub-national politicians at all levels – an important model for the future, including the European elections.</p>
20	<p>Underlines that in its Report on the final outcome, the plenary of COFE in its 40th proposal, measure 3, calls for the Committee to be reformed to "encompass adequate channels of dialogue for regions as well as cities and municipalities, giving it an enhanced role in the institutional architecture, if matters with a territorial impact are concerned";</p>	<p>Experience gathered notably in the field of communication activities revealed the complexity of the existing regulatory framework, with inherent opportunity costs in terms of competitiveness and resource allocation. As citizens' dialogues continue to be a competitive business, the Communication Directorate initiated the setting up of a simplified procedure (Regulation 28/2021), that shortens the deadline for application for communication support and radically simplifies the procedure for CoR members holding local dialogues and allows swift feedback on the main findings and conclusions thereof.</p>

21	<p>Welcomes the launch, in March 2021, of the new generation of the Committee's Regional Hubs Network (RegHub 2.0), part of the 'better regulation instruments' of the Committee, counting more than 50 members and observers (local and regional authorities and bodies from 21 Member States), tasked with monitoring the implementation of Union policies on the ground and ensuring that the views of regional and local stakeholders are taken into account when such policies are evaluated at European level; notes that RegHub 2.0 has become a subgroup of the Commission's Fit for Future (F4F) platform, a high-level expert group assessing existing Union policies and issuing opinions on how to better adapt those policies to future challenges, and contributed to four F4F opinions in 2021, out of which three were drafted by one of the Committee's representatives within the F4F platform;</p>	<p>The CoR is committed to its work with RegHub, reinforced its involvement in the European Commission's Fit for Future Platform and achieved further interinstitutional outreach to the Council and the European Parliament.</p>
22	<p>Notes with satisfaction that the Committee operates various platforms, networks and tools aiming to support the political cycle, including the Cohesion Alliance, Automotive Regions Alliance, European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation, European Entrepreneurial Region, Knowledge Exchange Platform, Broadband Platform, Green Deal Going Local Working Group, Zero Pollution Stakeholder Platform, COVID Platform, COR-UK Contact Group, Subsidiarity Monitoring Network, Covenant of Mayors, EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste, European Capital of Smart Tourism, Bio Regions and European Organic Awards, and that it also actively participates in networks established by other Union institutions, such as the Commission's F4F platform and the Cities and Regions for Integration of Migrants network;</p>	<p>The success of the CoR in running these platforms and networks with regional and local multipliers across the Union encourages the European Commission to ask for steadily more platforms to be run by the CoR. Recently such a request came as regards cross-border public services. As much as the CoR appreciates this political recognition by the European Commission, it has to state that no new budgetary resources are linked to such requests and that therefore there is a Commission «debt» in this respect which should be taken into consideration. The CoR has addressed this in a letter to DG BUDG and has brought the issue up in its DB 2024. It kindly asks the EP for support in this matter.</p>
23	<p>Observes that, in 2021, the Committee's political priorities for its 2020-2025 mandate were the guiding principles, and that those priorities were accompanied by three communication campaigns, one on bringing Europe closer to its people, another on understanding and responding to the societal transformation brought on by digital, environmental and demographic challenges, and the third on social, economic and territorial cohesion as a fundamental value ensuring the Union is at the service of its people; points out that, to implement those priorities, strong working relationships have been built with Members of Parliament and its relevant committees and with European Commissioners and the thematic services of the Commission (DGs);</p>	
24	<p>Observes the important contributions provided by the Committee to the drafting of Regulation (EU) 2021/1755^[4] that established the Brexit Adjustment Reserve and provided the legal foundation for the roll-out of a EUR 5,4 billion programme in the 2021-2023 period to help regions deal with the economic and social consequences of the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the Union;</p>	

25	<p>Points out the Committee's key role in the design and implementation of the missions in the Horizon Europe programme by encouraging close alignment of the EUR 1,5 billion provided for those missions with the EUR 30 billion provided under the structural funds for implementing regional innovation strategies; understands that those missions address important policy challenges and set objectives to be achieved by 2030, such as making 150 regions and communities climate-resilient, establishing 100 climate-neutral and smart cities and creating 100 living labs to lead the transition towards healthy soils; welcomes the enhanced cooperation established by the Committee's rapporteur with the Commission's DGs and the follow-up planned on the mission's activities, such as the development of regional innovation ecosystems and smart specialisation strategies and pilot projects such as the European Research Area Hubs and the Green transition in the smart specialisation concept;</p>	<p>The European Commission also recognises in its follow-up report on the CoR opinion dedicated to the missions that the «support of the Committee is instrumental to ensure that the EU missions can happen on the ground» and that «regional and local stakeholders (...) are key to the success of EU missions».</p>
26	<p>Welcomes the establishment of strategic co-operation in the implementation of the European Green Deal, such as the launch of the Green Deal Going Local campaign and others; points out, as part of the activities of the Committee's Green Deal Going Local working group, the enhanced cooperation with the Commission's DG for the Environment, which includes the setting up of a Zero Pollution Stakeholder Platform in 2021;</p>	<p>The CoR is devoted to the Green Deal implementation. The working group has served to significantly reinforce the role of the CoR in the decision-making process by having an open discussion on the 'Fit for 55' package, it has also strengthened the position of the CoR on the topic of sustainable mobility. The Green Deal Going Local campaign is already fully operational and aims to mobilise CoR members, YEPs and local councillors with the exchange of best practices, the Green Deal Going Local Handbook as well as the Green Deal Funding Alerts to enhance the capacities of LRAs to absorb EU funds and accelerate climate action.</p> <p>Green deal as a policy area where «examples from the ground» are particularly effective. The CoR has over 300 best practices submitted by +150 CoR members as part of showing LRAs' contribution to the EU delivering on its promises in relation to emissions and carbon neutrality.</p> <p>See also remark on item 22</p>
27	<p>Notes that, in January 2021, the Committee's broadband platform was relaunched jointly with the Commission in order to monitor the implementation of key Union initiatives on digital issues, including the European Digital Innovation Hubs as part of the Union's Digital Europe programme, with specific regard to Union funding for national, regional and local hubs to cover activities with a clear European added value; is aware that several opinions and publications of the Committee highlighted regional aspects of the Commission's 'Europe fit for the digital age' priority and that they had a significant impact on legislative proposals, such as the Digital Services Act^[5] and the Digital Markets Act^[6], and on the 2030 Digital Compass;</p>	<p>See remark on item 22</p>
28	<p>Notes that the adoption, in June 2021, of the Commission's long-term vision for the Union's rural areas resulted in considerable involvement of the Committee in the governance mechanism, in particular as regards Rural Pacts, and that the long term vision is in line with the rural agenda for the Union that the Committee has been advocating for since 2016; believes that that long-term vision provides a common framework for rural areas in the Union for engaging and cooperating at Union, national, regional and local level;</p>	

29	Believes that the inclusion of the local and regional level in implementing national recovery plans, through regular cooperation with the European Parliament's working group on the Recovery and Resilience Facility, will provide the opportunity to consider the regional and local dimension when monitoring implementing actions;	The CoR continues to cooperate closely with the EP on this issue. The ECON Chair took part in the Working Group twice in 2021. The CoR's RRF rapporteur took part in the Working Group again in 2022 and the CoR expects cooperation to continue throughout the implementation of the Facility until 2026.
HUMAN RESOURCES, EQUALITY AND STAFF WELL-BEING		
30	Notes the Committee's new organisational chart that centralises financial initiation within a pool of excellence and streamlines the IT governance model to better allocate the limited IT resources;	
31	Notes that, in 2021, the number of posts in the establishment plan amounted to 494, compared to 491 in 2020, and the total number of staff employed was 606, compared to 601 in 2020; notes the high occupation rate of 98 % in 2021, an increase compared to 96,3 % in 2020 and exceeding the target of at least 96% that was set for 2021-2022;	
32	Remarks that the Committee resorts to hiring temporary and contract staff for mid-term and long-term replacements and for specific projects, and that there were 141 temporary and contract staff in 2021, compared to 125 and 121 in 2020 and 2019 respectively; believes that that situation entails the risk of considerable loss of institutional memory, knowledge and expertise for the Committee when those temporary employment contracts come to an end; invites the Committee further to deepen its administrative cooperation with the EESC via the joint services arrangement to enhance the synergic effects of pooling staff;	<p>Since the outbreak of the COVID19-pandemic and ongoing legal challenges with regard to linguistic requirements for competitions, EPSO has had increasing difficulties in producing reserve lists for officials. The lack of reserve lists had a major impact on the recruitment of new officials for the CoR as of 2020 and explains in large part the marginal increase in the number of temporary staff as an unsuccessful recruitment procedure for an official often leads to the recruitment of a temporary staff member. Temporary and contract staff are essential to provide specific expertise and grant business continuity in some specific business areas where the recruitment of officials became more challenging.</p> <p>The CoR has put several measures into place to limit loss of institutional memory. It has a detailed register of procedures, which is being kept up-to-date and is available for all staff. It has detailed job descriptions available for all staff and it has a policy of creating detailed handovers whenever someone is leaving the institution, as is required by the internal control standards.</p> <p>The CoR underlines that the cooperation with the EESC is the closest among EU institutions and, notwithstanding the challenges it entails, has continued to develop it further, with important gains for the taxpayer. In 2021 the CoR signed a new cooperation agreement with the EESC to further enhance the administrative cooperation and ensure further pooling of staff following a reorganization of the joint services.</p>

33	<p>Calls on the Committee to explore synergies with other institutions, in terms of both logistics, digital services, driver's services and other administrative tasks, and certain outreach and communication activities, particularly in Member States where the Committee members have varied support networks and rely purely on their own local staff;</p>	<p>The CoR has the most advanced inter-institutional cooperation agreement with the EESC, sharing joint services in translation, logistics and IT, which is highly cost efficient. The CoR is already cooperating with other institutions (as per the below) but is open to consider further synergies at inter-institutional level (beyond the agreement with the EESC) in particular in the areas of translation and logistics.</p> <p>As regards communication the CoR has initiated and launched a quarterly meeting of the Director Generals for Communication of all EU institutions at its premises. This regular meeting has been praised by all EU Institutions and has lately focused mainly on the good and joined preparation of communication actions in view of the European elections in 2024</p> <p>The Committees are already cooperating with other institutions in the field of Logistics, in particular in what concerns call for tenders related to electricity, gas, furniture, kitchen equipment, etc. The Committees also take part in the Inter-institutional Infrastructure, Logistics and Internal Services Working Group (ILISWG).</p> <p>In terms of security, synergies with other EU's are made in terms of technical security (automated access to certain buildings of Commission and EP with the interinstitutional access badge), access management (sharing technical details with EEAS and using the financial services of the Commission concerning the eVisitor's access management system), use of interinstitutional framework contracts where possible (e.g. for buying fire extinguishers), knowledge and intelligence sharing (amongst others in the realm of the screening of external contractor's staff and threat assessments) and sharing of best practices (e.g. concerning the framework contract for guarding services).</p> <p>In the area of IT, the CoRis collaborating with the other Institutions in various configurations, community-wise in the Interinstitutional Committee for Digital Transformation (ICDT) and individually like the interactions with the European Commission on SUMMA and EU Sign for example. Joint procurement procedures remain the norm in the IT domain.</p> <p>Partnership and synergies have been consolidated with the European Commission to increase outreach and awareness raising about EU policies and achievements within the over 1 million regional and local politicians across Europe. This includes cooperation with EDICs and joint organization of local events.</p>
34	<p>Notes that the overall gender ratio in the Committee's staff in 2021 was 56,8 % women in the overall staff, the same as in 2020; regrets the gender imbalance in senior management in 2021 with 62,5 % of such positions occupied by men and 37,5 % by women; equally regrets the gender imbalance in middle management, where the ratio is 68,4 % men and 31,6 % women; encourages the responsible for recruitment to thoroughly commit to making vacancy notices more inclusive and to encourage more women to apply for management positions, including by ensuring a balanced representation on selection boards and by offering training possibilities for female staff that wish to prepare for a managerial career and proposing more flexible arrangements;</p>	<p>Given the small size of the institution and the limited number of management positions available, gender balance is a long-term task. Following the appointment of a new female director in 2023, the ratio will increase from 37.5% to 44.4% in senior management. As far as middle management is concerned, efforts continue to attract more female candidates through the mentoring exercises of the informal Network for gender balance in management and the various measures put in place in the D&I Strategy Action Plan.</p>

35	<p>Welcomes the diversity and inclusion strategy for the 2022-2027 period with its accompanying action plan and discussed in the Committee's commission for financial and administrative affairs and in the Committee's bureau in June 2022; observes that the strategy sets the short term target of 40% women in management with main overarching goal of 50% once the short term goal is achieved; reiterates its invitation to the Committee to be more ambitious in the annual action plans implementing that strategy;</p>	<p>The new D&I 2022-2026 strategy and its multi-annual action plan were developed. Given the CoR's limited resources we opted for a multi-annual action plan, making use of all possible synergies with the Joint Committee for D&I (CODI), an informal task force within the directorate in charge of human resources, in close cooperation with the gender balance network and constant monitoring of statistics and future perspectives (pension table). The choice of a multi-annual action plan is less detailed albeit not exhaustive and it focuses on the main objectives to be achieved.</p>
36	<p>Appreciates that among the measures expected in the diversity and inclusion strategy are a mentoring scheme for aspiring female managers, awareness raising workshops for managers on various equal opportunity-related topics and the close monitoring of statistics to enable the timely adoption of corrective measures; asks the Committee to report to Parliament on the progressive implementation of the action plan accompanying the diversity and inclusion strategy with the support of the Committee's joint committee for diversity and inclusion; reiterates the call on the Committee to continue its efforts to achieve gender balance at all hierarchical levels;</p>	<p>The CoR administration is progressively implementing its diversity and inclusion strategy and reports regularly to the Bureau.</p> <p>As close monitoring is crucial for the success of the action plan, facts and developments will be presented to all staff and staff representatives in the annual HR Report and also to management in order to meet the goals set in the 2022-2026 D&I strategy. A mid-term evaluation will be carried out in 2024 to assess the state of play of the objectives and in particular with regard to gender. The CoR will continue providing relevant information to the Parliament.</p> <p>It is possible to foresee a presentation to the relevant EP Committee in the future, if requested so.</p>
37	<p>Notes that the Committee employs officials from all Member States with the exception of one; encourages the Committee to continue to take action to reach a proper geographical distribution across all of its staff, with a particular focus on the management level; welcomes the initiatives to increase the visibility of its vacancies, publishing its notices on its website in order to increase chances for laureates from across the whole Union to apply, without any geographical discrimination; understands that all senior management posts are announced publicly, including via an extensive social media publicity campaign to ensure maximum outreach across all Member States; appreciates the use of staff ambassadors to generate a positive employer branding and that, as of 2021, the Committee increased its presence on social media and on on-line based recruitment platforms to advertise relevant vacant positions, mainly for non-permanent staff members or national experts, in addition to more traditional communication channels;</p>	
38	<p>Stresses that the Committee, like all Union institutions, must ensure that all Member States are proportionally represented on the staff while at the same time it must respect the competences and merits of all candidates; urges the Committee to take steps towards achieving geographical balance of nationals from all Member States, reflecting their diversity, as indicated in Article 27 of the Staff Regulations of Officials;</p>	<p>The CoR will further enhance and emphasize the measures outlined in point 37. The CoR has participated in previous years in various interinstitutional task forces and working groups regarding geographical balance and actively contributes to improving EU institutions' practices in this regard. One of the new approaches of the CoR would be to ensure the inclusion of underrepresented nationals in selection procedures for various staff categories, as well as to draw managers' attention to the importance of geographical balance for the institution.</p>

39	<p>Welcomes the continuous attention devoted to specific issues related to gender, such as the appointment, in 2021, on the occasion of the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Intersexism and Transphobia, of the first LGBTI+ contact person to assist colleagues who would like to discuss their personal experience working in the Committee or who have LGBTI+ family members; encourages the Committee to continue endorsing bottom-up initiatives that contribute to making the Committee a more inclusive workplace;</p>	<p>The Committee supports any initiative that would advance equity, dialogue and inclusiveness in the workplace. Informal internal networks are supported and encouraged, and we follow other inter-institutional networks such as Equality, Diversity Europe, among others.</p>
40	<p>Welcomes the launching of a staff satisfaction survey, closed on 16 April 2021, that focused on staff satisfaction with respect to teleworking and the working environment that staff would like for the post-pandemic period, and understands that its results were taken into account with the adoption of even more flexible teleworking conditions in 2022;</p>	<p>On 1 April 2022, a pilot project on working regime at the CoR was launched, taking into account the results of the 2021 staff survey.</p> <p>This pilot project has been evaluated by an evaluation committee composed both of HR and staff representatives (unions, staff committees). The evaluation committee launched a satisfaction survey in December 2022 which showed that more than 90% of respondents were satisfied with the new scheme.</p>
41	<p>Duly notes the Committee's commitment to modernise the HR framework and notes that the systems for teleworking were improved and a new hybrid working regime was prepared which is being tested in the Committee and the EESC's joint digital workplace pilot project; remarks that the project aims to define and share best practices with digital collaboration tools and is based on the concepts, also endorsed by Parliament in its previous discharge resolution, of results based management, digitalised work, telework on equal footing to work in the office, flexibility on the basis of a trust based system and the right to disconnect;</p>	<p>This successful work of modernisation involves an intensive dialogue with staff and the staff committee which, as it concerns change management, requires time, openness and good management.</p>
42	<p>Welcomes that the new pilot project on teleworking offers staff the possibility to telework two to three days per week; notes that it also includes the concept of work-life balance and underlines the notion of the right to disconnect; observes that, in the framework of the COVID-19 pandemic support actions, the Committee offered a lump sum of EUR 150-250 to staff in order to pay for any additional costs, including the purchase of ergonomic equipment;</p>	<p>See remark to item 41</p>
43	<p>Notes that, in 2021, the Committee prepared a new hybrid and flexible work regime together with the social partners, to be implemented in 2022; observes that the new regime foresees a wide range of part-time formulae, special part-time by time-credit in half-days and paid part-time subject to an ad hoc procedure in serious cases; notes that, in 2021, 118 decisions were taken with respect to 58 staff members benefitting from a flexible work regime, out of which 46 were women; remarks that parental leave and family leave are also possible and that 49 staff members, out of which 36 were women, benefitted from parental leave in 2021;</p>	<p>See remark to item 41</p>
44	<p>Notes that, in 2021, 14 burnout cases were reported (out of a total of 554 members of staff, compared to 12 possible cases of burnout reported in 2020) and acknowledges the Committee's personalised follow-up of absences; reiterates its recommendation for the Committee to keep the focus on primary prevention to reduce psychosocial risks and burnout as well as on the annual medical visits; appreciates, in this regard, that further training and courses are targeting physical well-being;</p>	<p>The CoR continues its proactive and personalised follow-up of absences. The CoR medical services is focused on prevention through actions such as stress measurement and actions for the promotion of well-being at work (e.g. osteopath, trainer, conferences). The focus of upcoming trainings will be on raising managers' awareness.</p>

45	<p>Notes that, on 26 April 2021, the Committee adopted Decision No 108/2021 on protecting dignity at work, managing conflict and combatting harassment; understands that that decision followed a lengthy dialogue with all concerned stakeholders, including the confidential counsellor network and the Committee's staff committee; appreciates that the new decision widens the scope, outlines the rules of conducts and the possible informal and formal conflict resolution mechanisms, and is endowed with a dedicated practical guide providing additional hands-on explanations; appreciates that, to raise awareness of that decision and its implications, info-sessions for staff and managers have been organised in addition to the regularly provided internal training courses on ethics and integrity;</p>	<p>The CoR administration ensures that all parties of the house, be it administrative or political, are kept aware of the existing rules and acts early on if needed to avoid the deviation from the regulatory framework which ensures transparency, fairness and accountability.</p>
46	<p>Is aware that the Committee's Regulation No 3/2021 of 2 February 2021 provides for the payment of a flat-rate remote meeting allowance for members of the Committee, duly mandated alternates and rapporteurs' experts and speakers invited to attend remote or hybrid meetings, with the aim of compensating for general expenses incurred when preparing for and participating in such meetings; understands that that Regulation sets, for the whole of 2021, the criteria for payment and verification, quantifying the allowance at EUR 200 per day and stipulating that to qualify for the allowance, members must sign a declaration of participation and submit it to the members' financial service, enabling the administration to verify the attendance of the person in question; points out, however, that in accordance with the recent adoption in May 2022 of Decision No 15/2022 on the application of extraordinary measures during the COVID-19 pandemic, the meetings of the bodies of the Committee currently all take place in person;</p>	<p>Decision No 15/2022 elapsed on 31/12/2022 and was replaced by Decision No 33/2022 which, in essence, extended the regime of Decision No 15/2022. Decision No 33/2022 elapsed on 30/04/2023 and was not replaced by a new decision.</p> <p>It follows that, since 1 May 2023, meetings and activities of CoR bodies can only be organised in-person, as there is no longer a legal basis for the payment of the remote meeting allowance, which was limited to extraordinary circumstances.</p> <p>The procedure on the organisation of remote and hybrid meetings on exceptional or ordinary circumstances is currently being reviewed in the framework of the Ad Hoc commission on the revision of the Rules of Procedure, and the outcome of this discussion will be presented to a next Bureau and plenary session.</p>
47	<p>Observes that the Committee welcomed a total of 58 trainees in 2021, out of which 48 were selected for a five month traineeship during which they received a monthly grant as well as a mobility allowance and reimbursement of their travel costs, 10 were short-term study visitors for shorter traineeship periods of one to four months, and three received a monthly income from the government of their country; welcomes the Committee's commitment to propose teleworking arrangements for its trainees as well;</p>	

48	<p>Reiterates its call on the Committee to integrate the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic in its internal management strategy in terms of business continuity and crisis management, IT responsiveness, resilience of the organisation, duty of care towards its staff, effective communication and flexible working processes, in order to develop a result-oriented management style that can encourage a healthy work-life balance;</p>	<p>Lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic have been incorporated all along the internal management since 2021.</p> <p>All critical administrative processes have been streamlined and digitalised in order to ensure business continuity in case of safety issues that force us to work remotely.</p> <p>On the basis of the lessons learnt from extended remote working during the Covid period and after an extensive social dialogue, a new decision on working conditions came into force on 1 April 2022. Initially set up as a 6-month pilot project, the application of the decision has been extended until the evaluation committee, composed of the administration and staff representatives, concludes its report and analyses the feedback received from staff via a joint EESC/CoR survey.</p> <p>The Business Continuity Policy has been reviewed to ensure a quick and effective reaction to resume the priority activities in case of a disruption in our business.</p> <p>The new methodology clarifies roles and responsibilities of all staff involved in the management of the lingering crises and establishes a thorough analysis of the priority business functions and activities per service, detailing the required resources, contact points, the interdependencies, the possible threats to it, the workaround solutions and the concrete strategy to resume each one of the priority activities , which will allow a swift response when there is no time to start defining strategies from scratch.</p> <p>The new policy includes a digital platform that enables access to all the Business Continuity strategies and details, also remotely, and allows quick updates of the data to adapt to changing circumstances.</p> <p>IT made a significant contribution to Business Continuity throughout the pandemic period. The DIIT is continuously updating IT systems and processes to adapt to the new working environment and to increase their resilience. Examples include evolving from an IT Helpdesk to an IT Servicedesk using new tools and communication channels, adapting Digital Solutions to new working methods and consolidating Digital Platforms by the commissioning of a new computer room, by finalising the new network topology and ongoing work on cloud-based disaster recovery.</p>
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	ETHICAL FRAMEWORK AND TRANSPARENCY	
49	<p>Reiterates its call on the Committee to reconsider its participation in the Transparency Register established 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^[7], which allows for the voluntary involvement of Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies other the signatory institutions, but does not cover the activities of regional and local authorities and the associations representing them; maintains its view on the limited validity of the Committee's Practical Guide on the interaction of staff with external entities, dating back to 2018, and reaffirms the importance of a high level of transparency with respect to lobbying meetings which might influence the Committee in its advisory role to the Union institutions; calls on the Committee to finalise its internal analysis of the available options and to join the Transparency Register;</p>	<p>The decision on the participation of the Committee to the EU Transparency Register is planned for an upcoming Bureau meeting.</p> <p>When decided, the corresponding measures will be notified to the Management Board of the EU Transparency Register.</p>
50	<p>Welcomes that, following Parliament's recommendations, the Committee has collected from its members and alternates the financial declarations that were in large part still missing (in January 2021, 146 financial declarations had still not been submitted despite the obligation to do so under the code of conduct which entered into force on 26 January 2020), meaning that in October 2022, 32 financial declarations were still missing out of a total of 629 appointed members and alternates; notes that out of the 32 missing declarations five concerned members appointed in 2022 who had not yet actively participated in the Committee's meetings, that the remaining 27 concerned alternates, 18 of whom were appointed in 2022, 2 in 2021 and 7 in 2020, and that, out of these alternates, only one person had participated in Committee activities (remotely and in 2021); encourages the Committee to follow up on any missing financial declarations and to pursue a strict policy to enforce transparency obligations;</p>	<p>In the context of the Committee's commitment to the observance of high ethical standards, a series of measures are in place concerning conflict of interest, anti-corruption and transparency.</p> <p>In 2023, the Committee intensified efforts to improve the situation regarding the missing financial declarations of Members, in particular in respect of the members and alternates appointed in previous years.</p> <p>As a result of these efforts, by May 2023 the number of members or alternates appointed in December 2021 or in 2022 without submitting a financial declaration was reduced to 10. Efforts in respect of these members are being pursued and stepped-up.</p> <p>To date, 6 alternate members appointed in January 2020 have failed to submit their financial declarations (it is to be noted that none of these 6 members has attended any meeting of the Committee since their appointment). The enforcement procedure laid down in the members' Code of Conduct is ongoing.</p>
51	<p>Notes that with the adoption of a new decision on the training regime, ethics training has become mandatory rather than recommended, including refresher courses, which will pave the way to a more intense participation of staff in initiatives on ethical issues; observes that, in 2021, 14 training sessions specifically on ethics and integrity took place with 251 members of staff taking part (60 % of managers and 57,30 % of all staff, managers included) and that 34 training sessions covering whistle-blowing, conflicts of interest and harassment and 25 sessions covering different aspects of financial management, also raising awareness of conflicts of interest, were organised;</p>	

52	<p>Observes that, in 2021, the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) investigated two cases involving the Committee, the first a matter of possible payment of undue travel allowances and the second allegations of financial wrongdoings, harassment and mismanagement in a joint service of the Committee and the EESC; remarks that the former case was closed when the Committee requested the reimbursement of the paid allowance for ethical reasons, not having identified any legal basis to impose such reimbursement, and that the second case was dismissed by OLAF with a recommendation to the Committee and the EESC to carry out an internal investigation on harassment and mismanagement; asks the Committee to report to Parliament on the outcome of that investigation which was launched in 2021;</p>	<p>Based on OLAF recommendation (in case OC/2020/0696/01 – see already explanation in discharge report 2021- reply to questions, point 20), the CoR opened the 3 February 2021 an internal investigation by appointing two investigators, one being staff member of the CoR, the other of the EESC. After an intensive independent investigation, gathering notably 41 testimonies of current and former staff members of both Committees, the investigation report of 9 June 2021 did not confirm any wrongdoings by the person concerned, but identified a conflictual situation in the joint service. On basis of the report and observations submitted by the person concerned, the CoR Secretary general invited the person concerned, accompanied by their lawyer, to the pre-disciplinary hearing on 7 September 2021 and concluded by decision of 22 September 2021 that no case could be made against the person concerned.</p> <p>However, in order to follow-up the identified conflict in the joint service, the Secretary-general launched, together with the Secretary-general of the EESC, a conflict management exercise. At the meeting of 26 October 2021, organized by the two Secretaries-general with the concerned joint service, their hierarchy and respective HR, a five actions plan had been decided to overcome the identified conflict (collective and individual coaching program, offer of external mediation, external expertise on technical issues being subject of the conflict, clarification of the functioning of the senior and middle management and as a temporary measure the alleviation of tasks for the head of unit). The CoR HR service, in collaboration with the EESC HR services, assisted the joint service to implement all these 5 actions during 2021- 2022. On 26 March 2022, the Secretaries-generals of both Committees invited all concerned persons for a mid-term for a taking stock on the progress made on the conflict management. The positive developments are recognized and the ongoing actions further supported during 2022.</p>
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53	<p>Regrets that the Committee has not adopted an anti-fraud strategy; calls on the Committee 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>In this regard, the CoR would like to point out the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Unlike the members of the European Parliament, the CoR members do not receive any remuneration from the CoR. The CoR reimburses the travel expenses actually incurred by its members for journeys to and from Brussels and the places where CoR meetings take place or for duly approved missions. The CoR also pays to its members flat-rate travel and meeting allowances to cover all their expenses in the context of those journeys. This information is publicly available at the CoR's official website^[8]. All these expenditures are covered by the EU budget and are duly audited. 2. The CoR adopted a Code of Conduct for members to ensure that its members exercise their duties with independence, impartiality, integrity and transparency. It entered into force in January 2020. <p>It obliges the members of the CoR to avoid any situation liable to give rise to a conflict of interest and to identify, in their public declaration of financial interests, any entity in which they have a direct financial interest, which might reasonably be perceived as a potential conflict of interest. In case of violation of these obligations, the president of the CoR shall adopt a reasoned decision laying down a penalty, and notify the member concerned.</p> <p>Furthermore, the members of the CoR must submit a declaration of financial interests within 60 days of taking office, which is then made available to the public.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. In 2017, the CoR concluded an administrative arrangement with OLAF^[9] in order to set up a co-operation framework between the two institutions and, in particular, to ensure the effectiveness of investigations led by OLAF. Under this administrative arrangement, the president or the secretary general of the CoR will transmit to OLAF, without delay, any information and evidence relating to possible cases of fraud, corruption and any other illegal activity detrimental to the interests of the European Union, when CoR members are involved in alleged irregularities. <p>Moreover, CoR members shall report directly to the president of the CoR or OLAF any known cases of corruption or irregularities^[10].</p> <p>The CoR cooperates with OLAF on a case-by-case basis, as in the first case mentioned in point 52. On this occasion, indeed, the CoR requested the reimbursement of the allowances paid to its member for ethical reasons following the discussions with OLAF which acknowledged that there was no strong legal basis for asking such reimbursement.</p> <p>The above-mentioned measures show that the CoR has a broad range of instruments to control the use of EU funds allocated to it.</p>
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54	Calls for an end to the use of external companies that, according to Yale University's ranking[11], continue to operate in Russia;	<p>CoR tends to align its policy with the inter-institutional practice. Thus, in line with other EU institutions, since 2022 the CoR has included provisions in its tender documents which exclude companies owned by persons or entities hit by EU sanctions against Russia from contracting with CoR.</p> <p>However, terminating running framework contracts with companies which continue to operate in Russia (e.g our bank, energy provider) is currently not envisaged at CoR. Indeed, doing so could have a significant impact on the operations of the CoR and would require the prior launch of new tender procedures to select replacement contractors.</p> <p>Yet, in the event that an inter-institutional agreement is reached and that a new legal basis is created for terminating contracts with companies which continue to operate in Russia, CoR will consider following that approach.</p>
DIGITALISATION, CYBERSECURITY, DATA PROTECTION		
55	Remarks that the Committee spent EUR 6 112 846 on IT projects and IT equipment in 2021, compared to EUR 6 392 372 and EUR 4 033 320 in 2020 and 2019 respectively; underlines that the budget increase in 2021 and 2020 was largely due to unused appropriations transferred from other budget lines;	The CoR used the occasion of COVID-19 related unused funds to upgrade its IT environment.
56	Is aware that budget transfers, however effective and timely, cannot replace the structural IT funding necessary for sound planning and programming of IT resources; is concerned by the underfunding, in particular for IT services, given that such underfunding means that a structured review cannot be carried out and, where needed, investment cannot be made in IT resources that are by definition longer-term and have maintenance over their entire lifetime; is concerned, in particular, because this can undermine cybersecurity and prevent the attraction and retention of the necessary IT expertise on the labour market;	<p>The CoR shares the EP's concern regarding the structural underfinancing in the area of IT. Over the last years, the CoR has had to ask for transfers, where possible, to increase the financing in the area of IT. This was only possible due to savings in the context of COVID-19. In the future, if the CoR should keep up with the many challenges in the area of IT, it will need more budget and HR allocated for this objective from the EU budgetary authorities.</p> <p>Cybersecurity threats and remote working have increased the need for secure and state of the art IT equipment for staff and members. Investment in cybersecurity and data protection, open-source software and green digital technology also respond to the EP 2019 discharge report and CoR's IT priorities. In the DB 2024 the CoR therefore asks for 2 additional posts for the specialized cyber-security staff. The CoR counts on the EP's support in this regard.</p> <p>Currently, IT spending at the Committee corresponds to some 4.5% of the total budget which it is below the average for other Institutions (EP and Council 6%). The Committee is aware that this is not enough to fully drive the current digital strategy but the structural underfunding of the institution does not allow for an appropriate funding of supporting services like IT without harming its core business. This also makes the Committee a comparably less attractive work place for IT experts who are highly in demand. Continued efforts to optimise IT spending are made including by improving IT Governance processes. These efforts are facilitated by the creation of a new directorate for Innovation and Information Technology.</p>

57	<p>Welcomes that the Committee significantly progressed towards full digitalisation of work processes, in particular electronic management of documents and their approval workflows, including ongoing work on full use of electronic signatures, management of financial actors, risk management and management of selection procedures or joint committees;</p>	<p>The CoR notes that digital solutions and software of other institutions are often offered in packages that are too expensive or not fit for purpose for small institutions. This hampers further cooperation with other institutions and make island in-house developments necessary.</p> <p>See also remarks to item 41 to 56</p>
58	<p>Notes that, in 2021, the Committee delivered several important projects to further digitalise its business processes and to facilitate the Committee members' political work, fostering multilingualism, streamlining, simplification and updating of existing business processes; observes that the Committee's digital future group brings together Committee members and Committee administration in order to discuss and advise on IT and digital matters and that the new administrative cooperation agreement with the EESC, which entered into force on 1 November 2021, fosters the exchange of good digital practices to drive its IT and digital services forward;</p>	<p>In recent years, with «Smart and modern administration» as a key objective, the CoR has conducted several initiatives to modernise its administration and free up resources for its core activities. It has taken the Covid-19 crisis as an opportunity to fully digitalise work processes. As regards the cooperation agreement with the EESC, the CoR underlines that the existing cooperation is already the closest among EU institutions and, notwithstanding the challenges it entails, is being developed further, with important gains for the taxpayer.</p> <p>The CoR's Digital Future Group brings politicians face to face with digitalisation and will bring benefits over future years. There is political, not just administrative steering of efficiency gains and new initiatives.</p>
59	<p>Notes the increasing number of cyber-threats to the IT infrastructure and online communication channels of the Committee, such as its external website; encourages the Committee to continue to pay a high level of attention to cybersecurity matters, strengthen its IT system and ensure a close cooperation with the Computer Emergency Response Team for the EU Institutions, bodies and agencies (CERT-EU) in order to enable the early identification of vulnerabilities and prevention and management of incidents and to raise cybersecurity awareness of its members and staff; encourages the Committee to carry out regular risk assessments of its IT infrastructure and to ensure regular audits and tests of its cyber defences;</p>	<p>Continued actions to strengthen cybersecurity are foreseen throughout 2023 including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fast vulnerability and patch management, • Secure management of privileged accounts, • Vulnerability assessments for web applications and penetration tests, • Raising user awareness through false-phishing exercises. <p>The above actions are preventive actions and when implemented together make it more difficult for unauthorised users to get access to Committee workstations or servers, to run malicious code on them and get access to data by exploiting application vulnerabilities.</p> <p>To date, there have been no cybersecurity incidents in 2023. Cooperation with CERT-EU continues.</p> <p>CoR under the DB 2024, has requested 2 additional posts for the cybersecurity field to comply with the EP request to pay attention to it and counts on the European Parliament's support in this regard.</p>
60	<p>Appreciates the Committee using open-source technology and, in 2021, the growing number of open-source libraries and frameworks used in the Committee's information systems and the new amendment processing applications based on open-source technologies;</p>	
61	<p>Welcomes that the majority of technical systems are hosted internally and managed by internal staff;</p>	

BUILDINGS AND SECURITY		
62	Notes that, on 10 May 2021, the budgetary authority approved the take-over of the rental contract, as per September 2021, by the Committee and the EESC of the former EEAS building at Belliard 100 (B100), the rental costs of which will be covered by the savings made as a result of the lower cost of renting the Van Maerlant (VMA) building compared to the cost of renting the buildings in Beillard 68 (B68) and Trèves 74 (TRE74), which were transferred to the Commission as of September 2022;	
63	Understands that the additional surface in B100 building will not fully compensate for the loss of space that occurred following the exchange of the Committee and the EESC's B68 and TRE74 buildings for the Commission's VMA building, a loss which amounts to approximately 5 000m ² compared to the situation at the beginning of 2021; acknowledges that such a loss cannot be entirely offset by alternative measures such as stepping up the office-space density of other buildings and increasing teleworking, but advises against entering into long-term commitments on new office space before such measures are fully explored;	A working group of the Committees is presently preparing recommendations in relation to the organisation of the workspace in a post-COVID environment. The Committees will explore different possible measures before entering into long-term commitments on new office space.
64	Observes that, to accommodate staff in an appropriate working environment and conditions, modernisation and refurbishment of the offices was necessary in the BvS (Rue Montoyer 92-102), REM (Rue Belliard 93) and VMA buildings; notes that, on 1 December 2021, the tender for the renovation works was awarded for the execution of works in the VMA building at a total cost of EUR 9 million; notes that the main part of that cost, around EUR 6 million, was already available in the initial 2021 budget approved by the budgetary authority as a "one off" request for the year 2021 and that it was possible to save appropriations for an amount of EUR 3 million from other budget lines and to use them for the VMA refurbishment;	
ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY		
65	Welcomes the study launched by the Committee in 2021 to define CO ₂ reduction targets and scenarios and to propose measures in various areas with the goal of better implementation of the European Green Deal in the Committee;	The Committee took the report of this study into consideration for its new objective of a 10% reduction of CO ₂ emissions by 2030, compared to 2019. The corresponding action plan is also based on the findings of this study
66	Welcomes the positive environmental accomplishments in 2021, as regards electricity, water and paper consumption (reductions of 2,1 %, 14,3 % and 55 %, respectively, compared to 2020); notes the installation of solar panels on two of the Committee's buildings and understands that further analysis is being carried out with the aim of extending the solar panel installation, likely in 2023;	<p>The Committees are very engaged to their environmental programme. Regarding energy consumption, objectives of an additional 5% reduction on electricity, gas and water consumption have been adopted early 2022 for the period 2022-2025, compares to 2019.</p> <p>Furthermore, the Committees reacted very rapidly in the energy crisis, by taking energy saving measures early 2022, following other EUI.</p> <p>However, there will always be emissions that cannot be avoided, so an offsetting scheme is necessary in order to ensure the goal of climate neutrality. This offsetting scheme is impacted by budgetary constraints of the Committee, that make it challenging to offset the total emissions every year. An interinstitutional approach on offsetting, as in 2020, is for the moment unfortunately not possible.</p>

67	<p>Highlights that 75,8 % of the Committee staff use eco-friendly means of transport; encourages the Committee to implement a mobility policy which promotes the use of sustainable travel modes for commuting, encompasses carpooling, bicycle parking spaces and electric battery chargers, and considers a financial contribution, either for public transport expenses or for renouncing the use of car parking facilities;</p>	<p>CoR pursues the implementation of the mobility policy (Plan de Déplacement d'Entreprise) adopted in early 2022 following the latest staff mobility survey.</p> <p>This includes i.a. the promotion of sustainable travel modes for commuting, a financial contribution for public transport, bicycle parking spaces, etc.</p> <p>There is an ongoing reflection on limiting the access to the parking for staff receiving a financial contribution for public transport expenses. But the introduction of a financial contribution for all staff renouncing the use of car parking facilities is currently not envisaged.</p> <p>In addition, CoR will undertake technical studies with a view to increase the number of electric car chargers in the Committees' parking facilities by 2025.</p>
INTERINSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION		
68	<p>Is aware of the robust cooperation with the EESC, via the joint services where some 460 members of staff (of which approximately 170 belonging to the Committee) and more than EUR 55million yearly (of which approximately EUR 24 million comes from the Committee) are pooled together by both committees; welcomes the current administrative cooperation agreement between the Committee and the EESC, that entered into force on 1 November 2021 with a duration of five years; believes that the current administrative cooperation agreement will contribute substantially to reinforce governance of the cooperation and the control mechanisms and is a renewed expression of the will to efficiently share resources and create synergies; notes that the current administrative cooperation agreement includes the creation of a directorate for innovation and information technology and, within the already existing joint services, the establishment of a centralised public procurement and financial management unit and a procurement expert group;</p>	<p>The CoR underlines that the cooperation with the EESC is the closest among EU institutions and, notwithstanding the challenges it entails, has continued to develop it further, with important gains for the taxpayer.</p> <p>The implementation of the cooperation agreement with the EESC is a successful step forward in strengthening the collaboration between the two Committees and in optimizing the use of their financial and human resources. Especially the creation of the new Directorate for Innovation and Information Technology (DIIT) is a big step forward for the two Committees paying tribute to the increasing importance of Information Technology and digitalisation for a modern and efficient administration. This change did not only align the operational structure with the strengthened budgetary efforts made over the past years to clear the backlog in IT investments, it also allows greater efficiency and further synergies between the two Committees making the most of tax payers money. Upgrading the former IT service into an own Directorate also paves the way for the further reinforcement and development of both institutions' IT capacities to provide even better support for Members and staff.</p>
69	<p>Observes that the Committee also cooperates with the Commission (for an annual fee) in the handling of staff pension and departure files (the Paymaster Office) and individual protocol rights (Directorate-General for Human Resources), training of staff (Directorate-General for Human Resources), early childhood centres and approved day nurseries (Office for Infrastructure and Logistics), use of various IT platforms (the ABAC management and information system, including its accounting system and assets, as well as contract modules, NAP for salary calculations and the SYSPER 2 personnel management and information system) (Directorates-General for Budget and Informatics), and publications in the Official Journal of the European Union (as of 2020 included in the Commission's budget);</p>	<p>The late billing and insufficient budgeting in the CoR's budget to pay these bills from the European Commission put the CoR in a difficult situation. First the CoR has often to introduce exception reports due to reasons beyond its control (late billing, unforeseen increase of bills etc). Secondly, the CoR has to introduce regularly external transfer requests in order to be able to pay these bills as its budgetary allocations are not sufficient.</p> <p>The problems have been addressed to DG BUDG including the proposal to consider takeover the institutions' expenditure related to OIB managed nurseries day care centers directly into the EC budget, much like as was done for PMO base line services.</p> <p>The change would ensure a higher level of sound financial management on all accounts, and contribute to significant administrative efficiency gains and synergies for all stakeholders concerned. CoR would kindly ask the European Parliament for support.</p>

70	<p>Observes that the Committee organises preparatory and follow-up (so called bilateral) meetings for its rapporteurs with Parliament, the Commission and the Council on its opinions, and that regular exchanges occur between the rapporteurs of the Committee and of Parliament on parallel dossiers; 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 CoR continues to boost its ability to provide evidence-based input from the ground level to the EU through its better regulation tools: TIA, RegHub, rural proofing, Subsidiarity monitoring committee and our contribution to the F4F Platform.</p> <p>See also remark on item D</p>
71	<p>Appreciates the involvement of Committee members in the entire political and legislative cycle of Union policies, either via an early input into the policy-agenda setting of the Commission or through an increased follow-up of its opinions to the co-legislators and in partnership with the Commission's services on the roll-out and evaluation of policies and legislation; encourages the Committee to further promote its achievements in the legislative cycle;</p>	<p>The CoR continues to promote its achievements through more focused annual impact reporting as well as through a more structured and visual communication product related to it.</p>
72	<p>Understands that the Committee has asked the Union institutions directly involved in legislation to grant the Committee access to the four-column document for specific legislative files so that the Committee can play its advisory role not only at the beginning of the legislative process but also at the stage of the trilogues; notes that this request is still pending and that the Committee is considering taking legal action if access is not granted; asks to be kept informed about the development of any dialogue on that matter;</p>	<p>The Council granted the CoR first time access to some trilogue documents in late 2022 – early 2023. Further requests are pending. Legal action has therefore not been considered necessary at this stage.</p> <p>The CoR is currently also renegotiating its cooperation agreement with the EP and will seek to establish a more intense cooperation with the EP delegation in the trilogues.</p>
73	<p>Is aware of the inter-institutional work carried out in 2021 with Parliament on the pilot project 'Building Europe with Local Councillors', which expresses the Committee's efforts to bring its support to local and regional authorities that are not officially represented in the Committee on matters related to opportunities vis-à-vis the Union; understands that the objective is to have at least one councillor responsible for Union affairs in each of the 120 000 regional and local councils in the Union and that, until today, the European Network of Regional and Local EU Councillors has about 2 000 members;</p>	<p>Key priority 2023-2024 is developing the largest and interactive European network of #EUCouncillors, with the goal to communicate on the opportunities and solutions the EU offers to local concerns (via ad hoc communication products and formats), building a direct dialogue with CoR Members. The main goal is to offer the network as contribution to other EU Institutions in view of the European Parliament elections. To this end EU Councillors are invited to actively promote local debates/citizens dialogues in close cooperation with CoR members and other EU Institutions (EC, EDICs, EP, EPIOs). In order to maximise its impact, the CoR is creating ad hoc partnerships, as regional offices based in Brussels, National associations of local and regional authorities, exploiting the potential of its network. Cooperation and synergies with BELC have been consistently improved to ensure convergence between the two projects.</p> <p>On top of the regular BELC Steering group, an operational coordination team is now in place between the DG COMM and CoR Communication Directorate.</p> <p>Actions and services are streamlined and regular exchanges and feedback activities are facilitated.</p> <p>The CoR, however, suggests that the BELC program, if designed as a permanent program, should be ultimately run by the Committee under a joined governance structure of the European Commission, the European Parliament and the European Committee of the Regions.</p>

74	<p>Is aware that the Committee holds its plenary sessions in the premises of Parliament and the Commission to compensate for the lack of capacity in its own conference rooms; notes that the Committee also buys interpreting services from the Commission (Directorate-General for Interpretation) and Parliament, rather than having its own interpreting service;</p>	<p>The Committee is currently looking into ways to better and more use distant interpretation facilities as this sector is developing fast. More inter-institutional cooperation would help to tackling the ongoing modernisation shift in the area.</p>
75	<p>Reiterates the position expressed in the previous discharge recommendations on the need to fully implement the cooperation agreement between Parliament, the Committee and the EESC of 5 February 2014 according to which a total of 60 translators, including 24 from the Committee, were transferred to Parliament in exchange for access to the services of the European Parliamentary Research Service; is aware that the Committee has requested an additional EUR 1,24 million in its draft budget for 2023 for the budget line 1400 Other staff, on top of the normal budget and as a way to compensate for the unbalanced effect of the implementation of that cooperation agreement, with a view to hiring 19 additional contract agents in 2023.</p>	<p>The additional funds of EUR 1,24 million for the recruitment of contract staff were granted for 2023. The funds have been allocated according to the political and administrative priorities of the institution and selection procedures initiated. The number of contract staff to be recruited is, however, also conditioned by the professional seniority of the candidates and their family situation which both impact the salary level of each staff member recruited.</p> <p>These additional contract agents' posts – in a form of additional appropriations for the contract agents - shall remain in the CoR budgets in the coming years. It will not require any additional increases in the CoR DB 2024 (except the salary indexation related part).</p>
76	<p>Welcomes the continuously increasing cooperation with Parliament, despite the restrictions imposed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, via bilateral cooperation on a set of selected priority files which are reviewed and updated every year; underlines that regular meetings between the Presidents and Vice-Presidents of the two institutions, and structured cooperation between the rapporteurs of both institutions, as well as between the Committee's commissions and Parliament's committees, increased throughout 2021; encourages the Committee to further engage in cooperation with Parliament;</p>	<p>The CoR has indeed a very large and effective cooperation with the European Parliament, including the EPRS. This has gradually been expanded over the years.</p> <p>The CoR has recently adopted a roadmap towards the EP elections, foreseeing a further intensification of cooperation and a bigger role for the CoR and local and regional authorities in that context. There is a growing cooperation between the EP and the CoR's Conference of Presidents, related to the now regular exchanges we have with MEPs in the CoP.</p> <p>The CoR is also currently embarking on a review of the cooperation agreement with the EP, the intention being to revise this agreement by end 2023.</p>
77	<p>Observes that, in 2021, the Committee continued its close cooperation with the trio of Council presidencies and the then Council presidency and issued four opinions based on referrals received from the Council presidency; notes that the Committee has also developed cooperation initiatives with the General-Secretariat of the Council on thematic priority files by presenting opinions and documents in the respective working parties of the Council.</p>	

	COMMUNICATION	
78	Notes that, in 2021, the budget assigned for communication was around EUR 2,1 million, of which approximately EUR 400 000 was used for events, EUR 800 000 for media and EUR 900 000 for web, social media and digital content; appreciates that the Committee measured double-digit percentage increases in press and social media outreach between 2020 and 2021, thanks to an internal reallocation of resources, which showed in its increased outreach; notes that the Committee is not likely to be able to do the same in the following years due to tighter budgetary constraints;	<p>The return to more traditional budgetary levels has accelerated the shift in focus towards qualitative reporting of the Committee and its members in the European media. Fewer partnerships, focused on major media agencies, as well as an increase in direct media relations with core media, is already bringing better value for money in terms of potential reach for each media mention.</p> <p>If further cuts to the CoR communication budget are implemented, as proposed by the European Commission, the CoR risks not being able to deliver on increased outreach/closing the gap with EU citizens as requested by other Institutions.</p>
79	Observes that the Committee's leading principles for enhancing its role and for better communication thereof are centred on increased involvement throughout all stages of the Union legislative process and on building more effective and trustful partnerships with other Union Institutions;	The CoR has continued its quarterly meetings of the Director Generals for Communication of all EU institutions at its premises. This regular meeting has been praised by all EU Institutions and has lately focused mainly on the good and joined preparation of communication actions in view of the European elections in 2024
80	Welcomes the establishment of a key performance indicator system to measure and monitor the effects of the Committee's communication, aligning communication priorities with political priorities and boosting decentralised communication through multiple initiatives, such as the digital masterclasses for its members, the development of a newsletter concept and the establishment of networks to strengthen relations with former members and trainees of the Committee and others;	<p>The 2022 CoR's Communication plan has streamlined and aligned even further the communication priorities with the political priorities of the second part of the 2020-2025 mandate and has introduced even more refined and innovative key performance indicators. Decentralised communication efforts have been increased and tools and services such as the digital masterclasses and the newsletter have been consolidated and improved to reach out a larger audience.</p> <p>Finally, it is important to underline that the networks of young politicians (YEPs), EU Councillors and other elected representatives are of course vital to the communication effort for the European elections.</p>
81	Notes the many networking initiatives in 2021, such as the Ukraine Working Group that launched a peer-to-peer initiative on transparency, the Zero-Pollution Stakeholder Platform jointly launched with the Commission to mainstream the zero-pollution agenda and the implementation of the Union's Zero-Pollution Action Plan, the common IT platform for the Young Elected Politicians scheme and the digital platform 'Let's get digital' to facilitate networking among the participating communication professionals from local, regional, national and Union authorities;	<p>Digital for networks includes also improving how the CoR runs networks: measuring engagement, adapting the messages based on digital feedback etc. and also about cost efficiencies.</p> <p>See also remark on item 22</p>
82	Agrees that the web streaming of the Committee's statutory meetings in all Union languages has fostered the general visibility of the Committee, and that the regional and local Barometer made available via the Union's open data portal, data.europa.eu, increases visibility among specialists;	<p>Web streaming:</p> <p>This project is still only temporarily financed (through external transfer). For 2024, this needs to become a basic service provided by the new Directorate for Innovation and IT in the Joint Services.</p>

83	Encourages the Committee to continue the systematic publication in the interinstitutional database of all its studies and welcomes the possibility, expected as of 2021 in the framework contracts for studies and external expertise, to include visuals and social media sharable content to strengthen the communication and outreach of final products;	Since 2021, all framework contracts signed for studies and external expertise include the possibility to provide visuals and social media sharable content to strengthen the communication and outreach of final products.
84	Notes that the Committee is currently present on the most popular proprietary social media platforms; encourages the Committee to use decentralised social network alternatives to very large online platforms, such as the Mastodon platform; shares the Committee's view that strengthening the use of more privacy-friendly alternative platforms, rather than the predominant mainstream ones, would make a statement in terms of data protection and digital sovereignty;	
85	Encourages the Committee to engage with the European Data Protection Supervisor, with a view to utilising the two open-source social media platforms, EU Voice and EU Video, that were launched as a public pilot project to promote the use of free and open-source social networks;	The CoR is currently present on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube and Flickr, similar to other EU institutions, and uses LiveBlog for interactive web communication. The CoR facilitates regular dialogue at Director-General and technical level (IOCC working group, in which EDSP participates) so that there is a common approach to this issue across the EU institutions, bodies and agencies.
86	Reiterates its call on the Committee to increase its communication efforts to strengthen the link with citizens by endorsing greater transparency in its operations, by intensifying the use of digital technologies and by pursuing a communication strategy that allows the correct perception and understanding of the Committee's role and of the way it fits into the Union's vision.	Greater transparency through digital technologies is also pursued in view of the CoR members' local activities, as local dialogues and events that have the capability to be webstreamed are embedded and presented on the CoR webpage.

[1] Resolution of the European Committee of the Regions — The European Committee of the Regions' priorities for 2020-2025 — Europe closer to the people through its villages, cities and regions (OJ C 324, 1.10.2020, p. 8).

[2] Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition Fund and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy (OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, p. 159).

[3] Regulation (EU) 2021/241 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 February 2021 establishing the Recovery and Resilience Facility (OJ L 57, 18.2.2021, p. 17).

[4] Regulation (EU) 2021/1755 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 October 2021 establishing the Brexit Adjustment Reserve (OJ L 357, 8.10.2021, p. 1).

[5] Regulation (EU) 2022/2065 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 October 2022 on a Single Market For Digital Services and amending Directive 2000/31/EC (Digital Services Act) (OJ L 277, 27.10.2022, p. 1).

[6] Regulation (EU) 2022/1925 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 September 2022 on contestable and fair markets in the digital sector and amending Directives (EU) 2019/1937 and (EU) 2020/1828 (Digital Markets Act) (OJ L 265, 12.10.2022, p. 1).

[7] OJ L 207, 11.6.2021, p. 1.

[8] <https://cor.europa.eu/en/members/Pages/travel-costs.aspx>

[9] Available at https://mycor.cor.europa.eu/EN/Directorate_E/Documents/Arrangement%20OI.AF%20CoR%20signed%2010-5-2017.pdf

[10] Article 2 § 4 of [CoR Decision No. 26/2004](#).

[11] <https://som.yale.edu/story/2022/over-1000-companies-have-curtailed-operations-russia-some-remain>



European Committee of the Regions

The European Committee of the Regions (CoR) is the EU's political assembly of 329 regional and local representatives from all 27 Member States. Our members are elected presidents of regions, regional councillors, mayors and local councillors - democratically accountable to more than 446 million European citizens. The CoR's main objectives are to involve regional and local authorities and the communities they represent in the EU's decision-making process and to inform them about EU policies. The European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council have to consult the Committee in policy areas affecting regions and cities. It can appeal to the Court of Justice of the European Union as a means of upholding EU law where there are breaches to the subsidiarity principle or failures to respect regional or local authorities.

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