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The CoR on the Ground Local and Regional Success Stories

The autumn 2023 trainees at the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) have created this exhibition to highlight local and regional achievements by members and Young Elected Politicians (YEPs). Featuring stories from members and YEPs, the exhibition provides first-hand examples of the impact of the CoR on the ground and its invaluable role in shaping vibrant communities across Europe. These accomplishments illustrate the significance of the CoR as the consultative body that represents regions and their citizens at the EU level.

Defining Success:

In this project, success is related to creating substantial societal value at the local and regional levels by establishing projects and initiatives that serve as a source of inspiration and learning. Positive impact encompasses a broad range of benefits, not limited to economic gains, but also includes social, environmental, cultural, and ethical progress. These achievements address multiple challenges, ranging from reducing the gender inequality gap to enhancing environmental protection.

Join us in celebrating these narratives!

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Pistoia Green Forum: The territory meets European and national institutions to design a sustainable future together

Lorenzo Galligani (ECR - Member)

Topic and difficulties

The Pistoia Green Forum was the first European local dialogue of the CoR, organised in September 2023 by the City Councillor of Pistoia and ECR Member Lorenzo Galligani, in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forests and the Municipality of Pistoia. As many stakeholders participated in this event, one of the main challenges was to coordinate all the agendas.



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Work on the ground

The event was attended by high-level speakers, representatives of EU institutions, local and regional Italian administrators, citizens and professional associations. The Forum elaborated on the prospects for the primary sector of the economy in the era of ecological transition, the policies that should be adopted to ensure growth in a fundamental sector whilst considering the climate change, and the environment. This allowed a real exchange between citizens and policy makers, creating a democratic dialogue.

Relation to the CoR

Lorenzo Galligani is a member of the ECR Group in the CoR, and a member of the SEDEC and NAT Commissions, where he actively participates in debates on agriculture, sustainability, tourism, and green transition. Prior to becoming a member of the CoR, he was a YEP and this experience has given him the opportunity to fully understand how the CoR ensures that the voices of regions and cities are heard. Being a member of the CoR has influenced his work as a City Councillor in Italy as he has proposed amendments to help rural, hill, and mountain municipalities in Tuscany.



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Revitalizing Urban Spaces: Pünkösdfürdő Park

Kata Tüttő (PES - Member)

Topic and difficulties

Breaking away from the traditional requirements of urban parks, this project focused on transforming a barren dam site into a suburban oasis. Located next to the Danube River, the design emphasis was on biodiversity and accessibility. The main construction challenge was to balance ecological principles with public benefits, creating a green public space that also protects citizens from flooding.

Work on the ground

Pünkösdfürdő Park offers a unique blend of natural and urban elements. Following the needs of the citizens expressed in the public forums held during the planning period, it includes a wide range of trees and plants representing different Hungarian landscapes, bird nests and a rainwater retention system. It also offers playgrounds, sports fields and educational spaces to meet the needs of citizens from young to elderly.



Relation to the CoR

Kata Tüttő actively participates in the ENVE Commission and has contributed as a rapporteur to various opinions, in particular on the circular economy and the European Green Deal. She believes that the CoR serves as a space for exchanging ideas and developing strategies, thus strengthening the vision of the projects she is involved in.



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Towards sustainable urban mobility

Linda Gaasch (The Greens - Member)

Topic and difficulties

Emissions from the transport sector in Europe account for one-third of the European Union's total greenhouse gas emissions. With an opinion on the New Urban Mobility Framework, in which Linda Gaasch actively participated, the CoR has opened a dialogue on the future of urban mobility, stressing the need for collaboration between local, regional, national and European levels to reduce emissions and make urban mobility sustainable, safe, accessible and affordable.



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Work on the ground

At the local level, the impact of the opinion was evident in increased awareness and a changed perspective on urban dynamics, although challenges remain in implementing specific changes due to majority preferences. Attention was particularly paid to addressing gender bias in mobility, and the need for diverse user groups to test mobility concepts before implementation was highlighted. This local discourse aligns with efforts to implement the City of Luxembourg's gender equality program.

Relation to the CoR

Linda Gaasch is a member of the Greens group in the Committee of the Regions and was rapporteur for the COTER-VII opinion on the new Urban Mobility Framework. Cities and regions voted in favor of this opinion, sending a strong message that they are ready for the mobility transition. The success of the opinion led to Linda's invitation to the European's Parliament REGI Committee and other high-level European events, fostering a valuable exchange of perspectives in the mobility sector.



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Paving Ukraine's way to the EU

Svitlana Yarova (PES - YEP)



Topic and difficulties

The participation of Svitlana Yarova, a local Ukrainian politician, in the Young Elected Politicians (YEP) programme enabled her community to lay the foundations for a progressive integration in the European Union.

Work on the ground

Svitlana Yarova is a member of the Socio-Economic Development and Budget Committee of the Vinnytsia City Council, in Ukraine's Podillya Region. She has been working on creating favorable conditions for business development, foreign investments and support for innovation start-ups. Unfortunately, all of these activities are now suspended due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Nevertheless, her city has redeveloped by shifting the region's priorities to attracting foreign investment and strengthening international technical assistance.

Relation to the CoR

Svitlana Yarova emphasises the importance of establishing ties with European institutions and bodies. In this regard, the CoR YEP Program has helped her build relationships with many members and YEPs, thus enabling her to develop her expertise in managing opportunities provided by the EU. Yarova participated in a European Parliament conference, speaking about her city, and helped to set up Vinnytsia Liaison Office in the CoR premises. She was also involved in drafting the CoR opinion on the Ukraine Facility.



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Defending the forgotten European territories

Helene Pollozec (Renew Europe - YEP)



Topic and difficulties

Helene Pollozec has made it her mission to give a voice to Europe's territories outside the continent, despite the physical distance. In a context of diminished representation and resources, it is necessary for the EU to be aware of all its regions, where the reality is different.

Work on the ground

«Mayotte has chosen to be French, and to remain so, but our realities are not taken into account».

Economically poorer territories are eligible for European aid, as their economies are generally based on agriculture, but it is not enough. Helene Pollozec seeks to make her region's voice heard beyond its borders, as well as raising awareness about the history of Mayotte. She is making sure that politics is aware of the situation of the sometimes-forgotten overseas territories and act accordingly: she is fighting for more financial resources, for access to drinking water, and against global warming.

Relation to the CoR

During the 157th CoR Plenary Session, YEP participant Helene Pollozec highlighted Mayotte, an outermost EU region facing challenges like climate change and immigration. She emphasised a drinking water crisis, urging the EU to recognise diverse realities and needs in its territories. In addition, the YEP programme has enabled her to forge links with other young politicians, through an educational platform that allows participants to learn from each other, fostering a deeper understanding of the realities of all European regions. In this way, Helene Pollozec was able to demonstrate the importance of considering the outermost regions, which are populated by European citizens.



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Building an industrial park to revitalize the economy

Olgierd Geblewicz (EPP - Member)

Topic and difficulties

Olgierd Geblewicz successfully established an industrial park in West Pomerania, Poland, demonstrating local leadership and initiative. His focus was on economic revitalization, overcoming initial reluctance and diversifying into tourism and green energy. The European Union's support and strategic decisions, particularly through the CoR, played a crucial role in overcoming challenges and influencing legislation.

Work on the ground

As President of the Region establishing an industrial park, he showcased a philosophy of action that required strategic planning and collaborative support. In regional politics, the focus on rebuilding demanded direct involvement, by creating infrastructure and fostering economic growth. Initiatives to attract youth, tourism, and green energy were not just proposals, but involved on-the-ground implementation and co-operation. The CoR demonstrated its ability to actively contribute to European policymaking.

Relation to the CoR

Olgierd Geblewicz, is currently the President of West Pomerania Region, president of the EPP group in the CoR, a member of the NAT and CIVEX Commissions and a representative for Poland in European politics. With a 13-year tenure, Geblewicz's commitment to environmental sustainability in West Pomerania has made it a pioneer in environmentally friendly practices.



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Rebuilding an abandoned space for the benefit of youth

Nicole Marnini (ECR - YEP)



Topic and difficulties

In 2021, an abandoned space was rebuilt and regenerated to dedicate it to the youth. The 'Spazio Stilo', a name chosen by the young citizens of San Giuliano Milanese, Italy, is now a coworking space where the youth can meet, attend vocational and training courses, and exchange ideas. The space was created to meet the needs of young people to work together remotely. The space is free to use for citizens under the age of 35. What was difficult about this project was communicating the importance of funding it.

Work on the ground

In terms of local impact, a new safe space for young people has been created in the centre of San Giuliano Milanese. At the regional level, the existence of this space allows the city of San Giuliano Milanese to participate in the calls for proposals of the Piemonte Region for youth policies. The City of San Giuliano Milanese has been awarded for 3 consecutive years funding for youth projects.

Relation to the CoR

Nicole Marnini has been a City Councillor for culture, events, equal opportunities, youth policy and communication in San Giuliano Milanese since 2016. Since 2023, she is also part of the YEP program at the CoR. In 2023, Nicole Marnini has launched the 'I go' project, which aims to create an information point for young people in the municipality of Melegnano and to provide young people with vouchers to take part in courses to learn new skills, for example in the field of IT or foreign languages.



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The construction of a clinic in the municipality of Ilinden

Marija Petrushevska (EPP - YEP)



Topic and difficulties

The project focused on the establishment of a clinic in the municipality of Ilinden, North Macedonia. It was discussed, presented and subsequently approved by the national Parliament. The health services provided by the clinic reach out to more than 20,000 to 30,000 residents across the entire region. Marija Petrushevska explains: «We have a responsibility to build infrastructure for cooperation, stability, prosperity and peace among people and countries. The main challenge is often to seize a short window of opportunity».

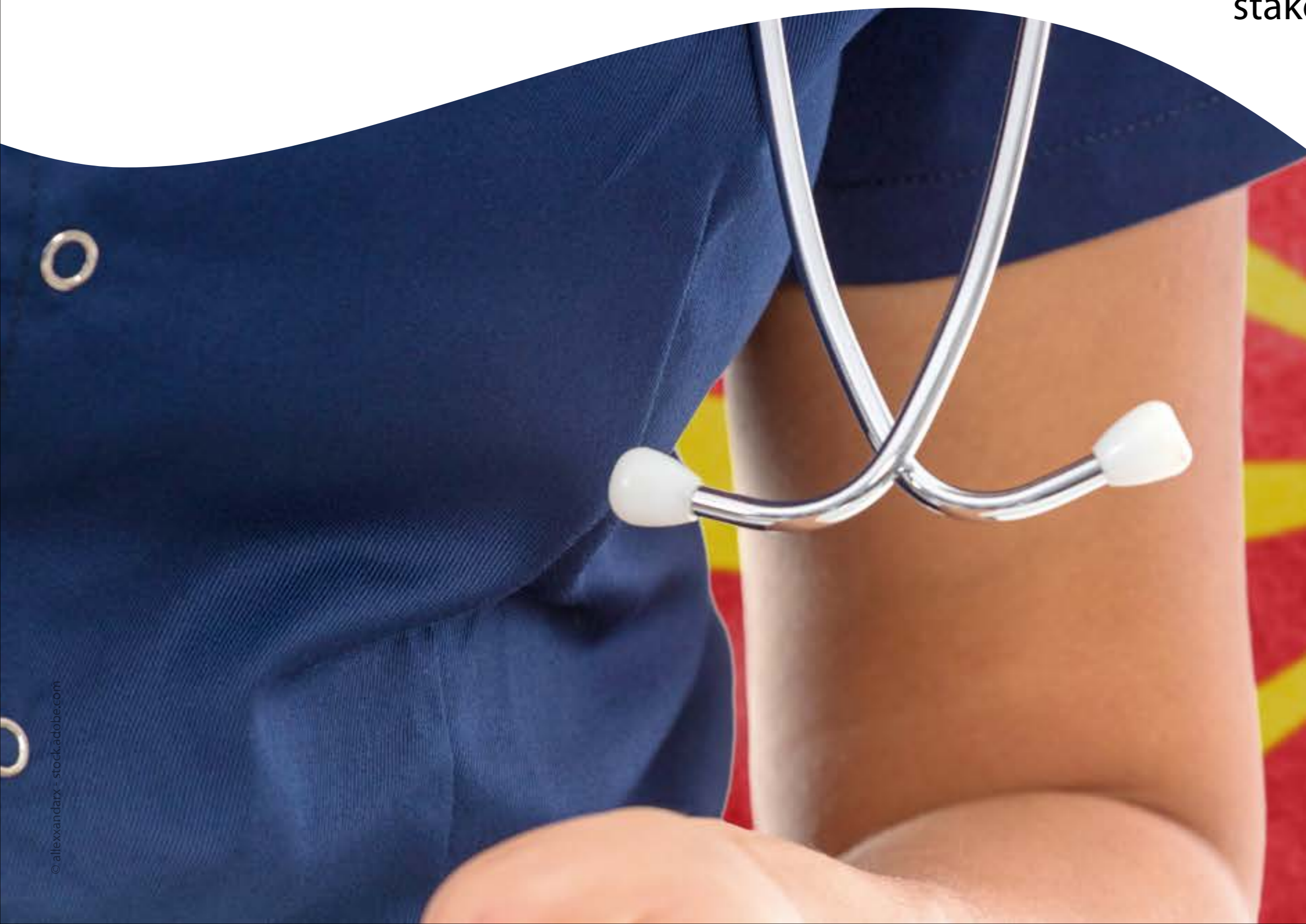
Work on the ground

Local self-governments and regions consistently bear the responsibility for improving the quality citizen's lives. In December 2023, the funds allocated for the construction of the clinic were approved as part of the national budget negotiations of North Macedonia. The parliamentary debates were enthusiastic and favourable to the construction of the new clinic in Ilinden.

Relation to the CoR

Both as part of the YEP program and as a representative of the VMRO-DPMNE in the North Macedonian national Parliament, Marija Petrushevska sends a positive message to young citizens embracing European values as a candidate or aspiring EU countries. This opportunity highlights the role of North Macedonia in promoting unity and strength through the involvement of all stakeholders in EU debates and processes.

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Greening schools: The Green Oasis Project

Thomas Wellens (EA - YEP)



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Topic and difficulties

Through the Green Oasis Project, Thomas Wellens focused on transforming concrete schoolyards into green and climate-resilient learning environments that positively impact students' learning and overall well-being in Belgium. Due to the unexpectedly high success rate of the project, the main challenge was the shortage of green professionals in the market. There were not enough professionals to meet the high interest from schools that wanted to participate in the project.

Work on the ground

By harnessing the power of nature through nature based solutions and ecological restoration, the goal of the project is not only to adapt schools to a changing climate, but also to increase learning in nature, not just about nature. The project ensures the least amount of planning burden and time commitment from the schools' staff and is at least 70% funded by the Province of Antwerp.

Relation to the CoR

Thomas Wellens, as a CoR YEP, has actively cooperated with other YEPs to further strengthen the vision and implementation of the project. He has the ambition to further collaborate with other members of this network to upscale this project to the European level.



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A local contest for young Europeans: an Interrail ticket to discover Europe

Florian Wunsch (The Greens - YEP)

Topic and difficulties

The project focuses on the development of an annual competition for young European students in the Josefstadt district of Vienna, with a prize of an Interrail voucher. There were two main difficulties in carrying out this project: getting the approval from other political parties, who were skeptical about how to reach the students; and getting the necessary funding for the project.

Work on the ground

Created in 2021, the idea of this competition is to raise European awareness among young people. Students answer general knowledge questions about Europe with the help of their teacher by sending a short text, a photo or some graphics. The three best entries are awarded Interrail voucher.



Relation to the CoR

Florian Wunsch has been selected as a YEP at the CoR thanks to his contribution as a district councilor in Vienna's Josefstadt District Council. He describes his experience at the CoR with enthusiasm, as he has not only actively participated in the European Week of Regions and Cities, but he has also been invited twice to speak at the European Parliament, as a YEP.



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The transformation of a mining city

Jasna Gabrič (Renew Europe - Member)

Topic and difficulties

Throughout her time in office, Jasna Gabrič has made it her mission to work on projects that will help transform and develop Trbovlje, Slovenia. With projects such as improving the city's infrastructure with skate parks and green spaces, and creating the Zasavje Business Incubator for entrepreneurs, she has worked to help Trbovlje evolve from a forgotten mining town to a thriving, developed one. The biggest challenge she faces in her work on the ground is the issue of funding, but she is proud that despite their cost, the projects have become extremely valuable to her community with the help of EU funding.

Work on the ground

Jasna Gabrič believes that there is still work to be done to further develop her city, but the infrastructure projects have been an important stepping stone in this process. These projects have not only changed the physical appearance of Trbovlje, but they have also sparked a change in its citizens. It has inspired them to realize the potential of their town and to envision a future in it, thereby changing the mentality of the city itself.

Relation to the CoR

Jasna Gabrič is a member of the municipal council in the Municipality of Trbovlje and the First Vice-President of the Renew Europe group in the CoR. She is Chair of JCC North Macedonia and follows the CIVEX and ENVE Commissions. Her work in Trbovlje has been recognized at the European level, as she was shortlisted in the top 10 for the 2018 World Mayor Award by the World Mayor Organisation, and eventually won the 2018 Mayor of Distinction Award.





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Defending human rights and promoting transparency with the public

Maxime Miltgen (PES - YEP)

Topic and difficulties

Maxime Miltgen actively defends the rights of all citizens and works to ensure that national decisions are properly communicated to the public to expose injustice when it occurs and to stimulate public debate. To this end, she is convinced of the crucial role that the mass media, and particularly the press, can play.

Work on the ground

Maxime Miltgen has brought up human rights concerns and constitutional inconsistencies following a municipal regulation that forbids all beggars from operating on Luxembourg City's streets. Although the implementation of the regulation could not be stopped, Miltgen has made it a priority to expose the matter to the public together with other city councillors, to promote complete transparency and involve citizens in the debate on the decision. Thanks to her interviews with Luxembourgish media, she has successfully raised public awareness of the issue and gained public support for her request for a legal review. As a result, Ms. Miltgen keeps up her determined efforts to combat inequality by guaranteeing openness and encouraging public involvement, thereby defending core democratic principles.

Relation to the CoR

Maxime Miltgen recently joined the YEP program and has been invited to participate in the 158th plenary session of the CoR. She is a city councillor in the capital of Luxembourg, an active member of the LSAP (Socialist's Workers Party) in Luxembourg and parliamentary attaché since July 2023, and currently chairs Femmes Socialistes, and is a constant advocate for women's rights. She emphasized that Member States can benefit from each other's best practices by using the CoR to bring local and regional issues to the EU level.



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Paving the way for a more sustainable and circular mobility industry from a regional perspective

Sergio Pérez Garcia (EA - Member)

Topic and difficulties

Sergio Pérez has been at the forefront of organizing the meeting of the Automotive Regions Alliance in Navarra, Spain, the second region to hold the presidency after Saxony, Germany. The Alliance is a CoR initiative that aims to bring together regions with a strong automotive sector that want to play an active role in decarbonizing the transport sector, strengthening regional industrial ecosystems and value creation, and ensuring cohesion in each European region affected by the green transition.



Work on the ground

Holding the presidency of the Automotive Regions Alliance is important for Navarra, as the automotive sector is the largest industry in the region. Through the Alliance of Automotive Regions, the aim is to share how the regions are making the industrial transition to decarbonization. «We have used Navarra as an example so that other regions can see how Navarra is aligning training and education within the automotive sector, taking into account the European Year of Skills, and allocating resources to R&D in the automotive sector, to carry out collaborative strategic projects, accompanying them to make this transition, whilst adapting to European regulations. We want to inspire other regions to do the same!»

Relation to the CoR

The initiative came about during a CoR plenary session, with thanks to the CoR's automotive intergroup (Cor AI) contribution in organizational matters, the choice of debate topics, and the representation in the ECON, SEDEC and COTER Commissions. The reports that the alliance produces for the development of sustainable vehicles and sustainable mobility are valuable in this context. «This has led us to more collaborations with the CoR, like Partnerships for Regional Innovation, or the Regional Innovation Valleys, where we are leading a proposal on the circular economy in collaboration with nine other regions».



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Building Compassionate Cities: Advocating for Inclusive Migration and Facilitating Integration in European Societies

Antje Grotheer (PES - Member)



Topic and difficulties

Antje Grotheer's narrative revolves around advocating for a welcoming, humane, and protective reception for refugees in need. With firsthand experiences in the Mediterranean and Ukraine, as well as visits to Greece, Spain and bordering regions of Poland, where initial support was extended to refugees, Antje Grotheer has been profoundly influenced. As CoR Rapporteur for various opinions, such as the 'New Pact on Migration and Asylum' and the 'Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027', she actively contributed to key regulations and advocates for the CoR's Cities and Regions for Integration.

Work on the ground

Antje Grotheer's impact is tangible in her region of Bremen, Germany, where comprehensive integration programs are in place for all newcomers, irrespective of their origin. Special support is also extended to women, recognizing the distinct needs of female refugees, and while specific attention and resources are allocated to Ukrainian refugees, the focus remains on acknowledging the diverse influx of refugees from different parts of the world. Unfortunately, a significant constraint is that the responsibility for receiving migrants and refugees largely lies with the federal government, limiting the control of local actors over the entire process.

Relation to the CoR

Since January 2020, Antje Grotheer has been an actively engaged member of the CoR, notably participating in the SEDEC and CIVEX Commissions. Additionally, she serves as the President of the Working Group Turkiye and has taken on the role of rapporteur for four opinions, all closely tied to her political commitment in Bremen. Antje Grotheer finds her CoR membership exceptionally rewarding on a personal level, citing the enriching encounters, the influx of new information on European affairs, and the firsthand experience of unity within territorial diversity. On a political front, she has successfully entered new networks, establishing alliances and finding advocates to amplify her local and regional projects.



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Strengthening the role of local and regional governments in the fight against climate change

Vincent Chauvet (Renew Europe - Member)

Topic and difficulties

Vincent Chauvet has been a driving force in the CoR's fight against climate change and has continuously pushed to advance the role of local and regional governments in climate action, promoting their legitimacy to be involved in the negotiation and implementation of international climate agreements. After all, local and regional governments have a serious role in fighting climate change and should have a serious role in the decision-making process.



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Work on the ground

Vincent Chauvet has been the Mayor of Autun, in the Bourgogne-Franche-Comte region of France, since 2017. At the local level Autun is tackling climate change in innovative ways, for example through promoting sustainable practices in the fashion industry by supporting local fashion producers to reduce energy and water usage and utilise more sustainable methods of production.

Relation to the CoR

Vincent Chauvet is an active member of the ENVE Commission, member of the CoR Green Deal Going Local, Climate Pact Ambassador and rapporteur for the CoR Opinion 'Stepping up Europe's 2030 climate ambition towards COP26'. As one of the CoR delegates at COP28 in 2023, representing local governments and municipal authorities, Vincent Chauvet highlighted how local and regional governments can be pivotal in bringing international climate negotiations closer to citizens, building trust and successfully implementing projects on the ground.



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A state-of-the-art sports park accessible to all citizens

Mia Šipek (EPP - YEP)

Topic and difficulties

As Vice President of Beli Manastir city council, Croatia, Mia Šipek and her team oversaw the new sports park project. It is a huge investment and long-term initiative to develop an affordable and accessible sports park for all citizens of the Beli Manastir municipality. Due to the long timeline over which the construction takes place, there are changing conditions on the ground in terms of prices of service providers and materials which were tough to manage at times, requiring Mia Šipek and the city council to be reactive and ensure the completion of the project.

Work on the ground

In the Osijek-Baranja County, this sports park represents a great opportunity and a meaningful use of EU funds for the development of impactful projects on citizens' everyday lives. The facilities are still under construction as such a huge project spans over multiple years. Successful projects within the municipality are frequent occurrences and have led them to being finalists in making the most remarkable project with EU funds in 2020-2021. Showcasing Mia Šipek's and the city council's relentless work to improve Beli Manastir and its infrastructure for its citizens.

Relation to the CoR

Mia Šipek is the Vice President of Beli Manastir's city council and is also part of the CoR YEP program. Whilst balancing her political role and her studies she has been able to attend the online sessions of the 2023 European Regions Week of Regions and Cities which has inspired her to take part in person as soon as possible.



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Fernhill Park and Gardens: Cultivating European Sustainability and Fostering Community Engagement

Emma Blain (EPP - Member)

Topic and difficulties

Fernhill Park and Gardens is located in the heart of Emma's local region, an area which has seen an enormous population growth in recent years, transforming from a rural to a suburban area. This has brought challenges- with the need for more facilities and recreational opportunities. Initially a private home from the 1700s, Fernhill and its gardens of historic significance, were to be developed for housing before being purchased by the local authority with the aim of developing it as a public park for Dublin.

Work on the ground

Since then, Emma and her team have worked with the community to create a facility that people of all ages can enjoy, ensuring that sustainability and the enhancement of biodiversity are at the heart of the project. The development of the park has always followed these principles, with play and sports facilities as well as walking trails and a community garden developed in harmony with the environment in which they are built. Local school children often visit the park, where they are immersed in a natural environment and see biodiversity in action. It offers citizens the opportunity for community engagement and a direct connection to nature.



Relation to the CoR

Emma Blain is a member of the EPP group in the CoR. Through the exchange of ideas, knowledge and opinions with other members, she has realized that they face many of the same challenges, especially when it comes to social issues. In addition, being a member of the SEDEC Commission has been particularly valuable to her as it deals with many of the issues that have always been among Emma's priorities as an elected representative, such as education. She also values the friendships she has made with other members from across the EU, as they all share a common goal of serving and representing the people of their regions.



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Driving Aragón's Automotive Future

Jorge Azcón Navarro (EPP - Member)

Topic and difficulties

Aragón, an autonomous community in Spain, aims to propel the automotive sector, seeking EU support through the establishment of Transition Funds 2.0 for key automotive regions. Among the challenges is securing green and digital transition funds during the upcoming European legislative term. Emphasizing the importance of these transition, Aragón not only aims to address the current needs of the automotive industry, but also strategically position it for a digitally transformative and sustainable future.

Work on the ground

Jorge Azcón, a member of the CoR AI group within the CoR, is also part of the Automotive Regions Alliance (ARA). He envisions Aragón playing an active role in influencing EU institutions through this crucial alliance to bolster the automotive sector. Moreover, he considers the possibility of Aragón applying for the second vice presidency. The CoR plays a pivotal role, serving as a platform for regional collaboration and amplifying Aragón's voice and impact.

Relation to the CoR

Jorge Azcón is a member of the CoR, not only now as President of the Autonomous Community of Aragón, but also when he was Mayor of Zaragoza, Spain. He is also a member of the COTER and ECON Commissions, the CoR AI and ARA groups, among others. Jorge Azcón is a staunch Europeanist who is passionately involved in European affairs. His multi-faceted role ensures that Aragón is actively involved in shaping European policy for the automotive industry.



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