



**European Committee
of the Regions**

Brussels, 29 January 2024

**224th MEETING OF THE BUREAU OF THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE
REGIONS**

– 30 JANUARY 2024 –

ITEM 9 A

IMPACT OF COR OPINIONS: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Submitted by the secretary-general

FOR DECISION

SUMMARY

Bureau meeting: 224

Date: 30/1/2024

Item 9a

Impact of CoR opinions – Executive Summary

Type:

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

Short description:

Under Rule 59 of the Rules of Procedure, the Secretariat-General is required to submit a report to the Plenary Assembly once a year on the impact of European Committee of the Regions (CoR) opinions.

The Annual Impact Report for 2023, like in the previous year, is presented at the very first Bureau meeting and plenary of 2024. In terms of content, the report is structured around the three political priorities of the CoR's 2020-2025 term of office, complemented by an overarching priority of the CoR: support for Ukraine.

The 60-page report is presented in item 9. This executive summary is available in all languages. In addition to these documents, a visually attractive, graphic-based communication product (similar to the EU Regional and Local Barometer teaser) will be made available in time for the plenary session in one language.

The Bureau is asked to:

- approve the 2023 Annual Impact Report;
- take note of the consistent and stable methodology which enabled the content and communication product to be ready more quickly compared to previous reports adopted under Rule 59.

Remarks: N/A

1. The CoR's Impact: Current Achievements – Executive Summary

As a consultative body to the European institutions, the main role of the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) is to represent the European Union's local and regional authorities in the EU decision-making process. The impact of CoR opinions is assessed in terms of:

- achievements in the EU legislative process and in general European debates (impact on preparatory or final legal texts);
- visibility for local and regional authorities in the setting of the EU's agenda;
- tangible changes in the EU's working methods, notably through alliance-building and interinstitutional cooperation or in people's day-to-day lives brought about through EU legislation or EU actions promoted or initiated by the CoR.

In 2023, the CoR adopted 53 opinions and 6 resolutions, which is a slightly lower figure than in previous years given a decreasing number of referrals in the penultimate year of the European Commission's mandate.

It is also important to assess how the CoR's views and opinions are presented to the other EU institutions and how CoR rapporteurs interact – before and after the adoption of their opinion – with the representatives of the legislative institutions, namely the European Parliament, the Council of the EU (and its rotating presidency) and the European Commission. In addition, the CoR President, the First Vice-President, the CoR commission chairs and the presidents of the political groups participate in these interinstitutional relations. Meetings and exchanges with EU institutions during the course of the year are essential outcome indicators for our work.

Overall, the output and outcome indicators clearly show that the CoR has maintained its crucial role as the local and regional voice at EU level. Moreover, the full report shows the progress made with regard to each of the three political priorities of the CoR's 2020-2025 term of office.

First, in relation to bringing Europe closer to its citizens, the following key impacts have been highlighted:

- the CoR's strong engagement in high-level discussions on skills policies during the **European Year of Skills** reinforced its position as a key stakeholder in this policy area;
- the European Parliament recognised the CoR's contribution to strengthening European democracy and made references to enhancing the role of the CoR in several reports;
- the 2023 **Young Elected Politicians (YEP)** programme's cohort has been launched, with 156 YEPs covering all EU Member States and, for the first time, all EU candidate countries, bringing the total number of participants in the YEP Programme since its establishment to 836;
- in 2023, the **European Network of Regional and Local Councillors** reached 3 000 participants and gathered local and regional politicians from all 27 EU Member States, having a significant impact by bringing Europe closer to local communities and encouraging local and regional councillors to organise EU and CoR-related activities in their regions, cities, towns and villages;
- a **Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the CoR and the European Parliament** on communication in the run-up and follow-up to the 2024 European elections, where the CoR has a key role to play from a democratic, policy and institutional point of view;

- progress was made by the CoR as regards building a more inclusive, gender-equal and fair EU by improving gender equality, including in its own workings, through a dedicated **Gender Equality Action Plan** adopted by the Bureau on 9 October and the subsequent appointment of a special Bureau rapporteur for the CoR Gender Equality Action Plan, Ms Sari Rautio (FI/EPP);
- a great **outreach to local citizens and fora** at the occasion of the CoR external Bureau meetings in Kiruna (Sweden) and Logroño (Spain).

Second, in relation to building resilient communities, the key impacts included the following:

- the **Green Deal Going Local (GDGL) Handbook** was released and members' promotion of Green Deal best practices was scaled up;
- the European Commission's proposal following the **CoR's opinion on Fit 4 for Future** incorporates many of the recommendations of this opinion, and the Council and the European Parliament also took up other points;
- the first-ever **meeting between the CoR delegation and UN Secretary-General António Guterres** took place at a high-level political forum in New York;
- the CoR was formally recognised as a key partner in implementing UN COP 15 and other relevant activities on biodiversity;
- explicit reference was made to the CoR's work in the first **EU Voluntary Review of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** drafted by the European Commission;
- the draft Council conclusions took on board the CoR's line on the European Semester and also gave prominent recognition to the **CoR's role as a key driver in boosting SDG localisation**;
- CoR activities at **UNFCCC COP28**, where the CoR's position was included for the first time in the Council conclusions setting out the EU's negotiating position; the CoR played a leading role in the first-ever joint position taken by the Local Governments and Municipal Authorities Constituency (LGMA), endorsed by 65+ global networks and subnational governments; and the CoR took the lead in getting cities and regions mentioned in the COP28 conclusions;
- the CoR opinion on the *Critical raw materials package*¹ had a strong influence on the European Parliament's position;
- the European Parliament's report on the Single Market Emergency Instrument adopted amendments from the CoR's opinion, with a specific reference to these amendments as coming from the CoR;
- the European Commission **launched the joint Horizon Europe and Interregional Innovation Investments call for Regional Innovation Valleys**, responding to the CoR's appeal for better synergies between the regional policy funds and the Horizon programme in support of regional innovation;
- the **Fit for 55 package** was successfully followed up, including pilot action from the CoR to influence trilogue negotiations;
- several agriculture and food policy-related CoR opinions received a lot of coverage in the European, national and local press;
- the CoR's position in the opinion *Preparing for and dealing with crises: strengthening the resilience of the Union, its regions and cities* was largely echoed by the European Commission. One of the main calls in the opinion was for the development of a **territorial vulnerability scoreboard** in close collaboration with the European Commission in order to better understand and

¹ ECON-VII-031, *Critical raw materials package*, rapporteur: Isolde Ries (DE/PES), COR-2023-02188-00-01-AC-TRA.

take account of the risks related to the vulnerabilities of local areas and populations to disasters and crises. This vulnerability dashboard was launched in November 2023;

- the key messages in the CoR opinion on the short-term rental sector were reflected in the deal concluded by EU negotiators to enable local authorities to handle short-term rentals. In terms of media outreach, coverage of the debate that took place in the NAT Commission meeting was extremely far-reaching extending as far as Panama and Ecuador.

Third, in relation to promoting cohesion as a fundamental value of the EU, key impacts included the following:

- the own-initiative opinion on *The future of Cohesion Policy post-2027*² allowed the CoR, as the first institution working on the matter, to assume a **proactive and leading role on the future of cohesion policy**; the **Council conclusions on the future of cohesion policy** adopted by the General Affairs Council on 30 November took on board many aspects that were put forward in the CoR opinion;
- through its Automotive Regions Alliance (ARA), the CoR underlined the need for policy and budgetary measures for a just transition; the ARA and the CoR were referred explicitly to in Regulation (EU) 2023/851 as key partners in ensuring a successful just and sustainable transition;
- the **CoR secured support from the European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion (ESPON) with territorial impact assessments** under the new ESPON 2030 programme;
- the Council Recommendation on developing social economy framework conditions incorporated several requests from the CoR's opinion, which highlighted the needs of but also the potential of the social economy to generate inclusive and sustainable local growth;
- the **European Parliament's New European Bauhaus (NEB) Pilot Project**³ for a voucher scheme was an EU action initiated by the CoR; the pilot will be implemented by the Joint Research Centre in partnership with the CoR;
- the importance of the CoR's input into the report on *A long-term vision for the EU's rural areas* was publicly acknowledged at the High-Level Policy Forum under the Spanish Presidency of the Council;
- for the opinions *Towards zero emission road transport: Deploying alternative fuels infrastructure and strengthening CO₂ emission performance standards*⁴ and *Guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network (TEN-T)*⁵ the CoR received access to the documents of the interinstitutional negotiations ("trilogues") and was able to present its views at this crucial stage of the legislative process;
- the 21st edition of the European Week of Regions and Cities confirmed its status as the largest EU interinstitutional event dedicated to cohesion topics across the EU, with 8 418 registered

² COTER-VII/030 – *The future of Cohesion policy post-2027* – co-rapporteurs: Vasco Alves Cordeiro (PT/PES) and Emil Boc (RO/EPP) – COR-2023-02250-PAC-TRA.

³ The EP Pilot Project will receive EUR 1 450 000 on commitments and EUR 362 500 on payments.

⁴ COTER-VII/015 – *Towards zero emission road transport: Deploying alternative fuels infrastructure and strengthening CO₂ emission performance standards* – rapporteur: Adrian Teban (RO/EPP) – COR-2021-04913-00-00-AC-TRA.

⁵ COTER-VII/019 – *Guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network (TEN-T)* – rapporteur: Isabelle Boudineau (FR/PES) – COR-2022-01228-00-00-AC-TRA.

participants on site and over 3 000 online, including some 600 elected representatives, 244 sessions and 210 workshops.

Supporting Ukraine: an overarching priority of the CoR

- The CoR, representing the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for the Reconstruction of Ukraine, participated for the first time in the 2023 London Ukraine Recovery Conference;
- The European Parliament reflected several legislative amendments and recommendations from the CoR's opinion⁶ in its report on the establishment of the Ukraine Facility.
- The European Parliament highlighted the CoR's guiding principles in its *Resolution on the sustainable reconstruction and integration of Ukraine into the Euro-Atlantic community*.
- The CoR further promoted the Summer Camps for Ukrainian Children initiative by increasing coordination efforts and reaching out to partners.
- The CoR Conference of Presidents (CoP) and the Working Group on Ukraine travelled to Ukraine, to Kyiv and Lviv in April and October 2023 respectively, met with national, regional and local leaders, including President Volodymyr Zelenskyi, visited the war-torn deoccupied communities, having seen the urgent need to coordinate reconstruction efforts on the ground, and provided a tangible signal of the CoR's solidarity with Ukraine's cities and regions and the Ukrainian people.

In 2023, media and social media communication activities generated a consistent impact and maximised the CoR's visibility and credibility. In particular, they resulted in around 12 926 media mentions. On top of the large coverage registered in regional and local media, 2023 was also marked by high-quality coverage in main national and European outlets. Social media activities have also produced excellent results to date: 2 123 of the CoR's own social media posts received 45 022 engagements. The engagement gained through boosted and paid social media content had an even larger impact on the CoR's social media accounts. The CoR's social networks registered a steady growth of followers: Facebook: 59 620, Instagram: 13 633, LinkedIn: 64 202 and X: 57 267.

The CoR Conference of Presidents (CoP) adopted strategic guidance in view of bringing the different activities of the CoR together under its Annual Strategic Planning Cycle (ASPC) in order to ensure consistency and maximise impact. The work initiated by the CoR's impact oversight coordinator, in the person of the chair of the president of the Renew Europe group continued in 2023.

PROPOSAL:

Members of the Bureau are invited to approve this Executive Summary and overview of the main achievements as part of the 2023 report on the impact of the Committee's opinions.

⁶ CIVEX-VII/025 – *The Ukraine Facility*, rapporteur-general: Dario Nardella (IT/PES) – COR-2023-03816-00-00-AC-TRA.