

EUROPEAN UNION



Committee of the Regions

DECISION No 0009/2010

on interregional groups at the Committee of the Regions

THE BUREAU OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS,

HAVING REGARD TO the Rules of Procedure of the Committee of the Regions and in particular to Rules 5 and 10;

WHEREAS interregional groups, which bring together members and alternates of the Committee of the Regions on a voluntary basis, provide an opportunity to discuss matters informally, exchange views and increase expertise on subjects likely to promote cooperation between local and regional authorities in the Member States;

WHEREAS interregional groups, as platforms for informal discussion, promote the emergence of ideas likely to subsequently enrich the work of the bodies of the Committee of the Regions;

WHEREAS there is a need to lay down the minimum criteria for establishing an interregional group;

HAS ADOPTED THIS DECISION:

Article 1
Membership

For the purposes of the implementation of Rule 10 of the Rules of Procedure, an interregional group shall be understood to be any group comprising at least ten full members of the Committee of the Regions belonging to either at least four national delegations or a group of regions working together on the basis of an agreement between states to promote trans-border cooperation.

Article 2
Establishment arrangements

1. In accordance with Rule 10 of the Rules of Procedure, an interregional group is duly formed on a decision of the Bureau.
2. Members wishing to form an interregional group shall submit to the president of the Committee of the Regions a detailed proposal setting out:
 - The interregional group's sphere of activity; and
 - An indicative work programme.
3. The Bureau shall base its decision on the following criteria:
 - The aims of the interregional group must make a clear contribution to the objectives of the European Union at the level of its regional or local bodies.
 - The establishment and operation of the interregional group must be compatible with the institutional role and the operation of the Committee of the Regions and offer added value for the work of its bodies.
 - The interregional group must uphold the reputation of the Committee of the Regions, and respect the principles enshrined in the Treaties, in particular the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.
 - Interregional groups may not engage in any sphere of activity that might result in confusion with spheres assigned to a commission, working group, joint committee or any other political body in which members of the Committee of the Regions already take part.
4. On the basis of a decision by the Bureau, each interregional group shall be included in a register of all the interregional groups, and containing a members list by group, together with a registration form signed by each member of the group. The register shall be kept and updated by the general secretariat in order to ensure, inter alia, that the minimum establishment criteria continue to be met.

Article 3
Procedure

1. Interregional groups shall not form constituent bodies of the Committee of the Regions.

2. Interregional groups cannot take positions on behalf of the Committee of the Regions or its constituent bodies.
3. No interregional group meeting may be organised in such a way that it hinders a meeting held by a body of the Committee of the Regions or imposes any financial burden on the Committee through the refund of travel expenses or the payment of flat-rate travel and meeting allowances.
4. Provision of interpreting services by the Committee of the Regions for an interregional group shall be guaranteed for two meetings per year, with interpreting for a maximum of three languages, and provided that sufficient financial and logistical means are available under the relevant budget line.
5. The chairman of the interregional group shall inform the president of the Committee of the Regions of any changes in membership or of the disbanding of the group.
6. Interregional groups shall submit an-activity report every two and a half years.
7. If, following entry in the register, the criteria under Articles 1 and 2 are no longer met or if an interregional group has not submitted an activity report, the president of the Committee of the Regions shall refer the matter to the Bureau, which rules on the group's expiry or suspension.

Article 4
Final provision

Decision No 001/2007 on interregional groups at the Committee of the Regions is repealed.

As from the date of the adoption of this decision, the secretary-general shall ascertain that the interregional groups established on the basis of Decision 1/2007 on interregional groups at the Committee of the Regions meet the conditions set out in Articles 1 and 2 and in Article 3(7). Otherwise, the secretary-general shall inform the president of the Committee of the Regions, who shall refer the matter to the Bureau, which rules on the disbanding of interregional groups failing to meet these conditions.

Without prejudice to the above, this decision shall take effect on 1 January 2011.

Brussels, ...

For the Bureau
of the Committee of the Regions

Mercedes Bresso

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Appendix 1

Practical aspects of the operation of the CoR interregional groups

1. Operation

The interregional groups carry out their activities autonomously. Each group sets up a secretariat which is external to the Committee's structures and which manages the group's work and organisational aspects.

Secretariat tasks are currently carried out respectively by:

- the representation of the regional government of Aragon in Brussels for the Regions with legislative powers group (until the end of 2010);
- the joint representation of Hamburg and of the *Land* of Schleswig-Holstein to the EU for the Baltic Sea Regions group;
- the representation of Bremen to the EU for the North Sea-English Channel group;
- the representation of the Saarland region to the EU for the Saar-Lor-Lux group;
- the representation of the Land of Baden-Württemberg for the Danube group;
- the office of the Rioja region in Brussels for the Wine group (inactive recently);
- Mr Blanc's assistant at the French Senate for the Mediterranean group;
- the representation of Brittany in Brussels for the Automotive Crisis group.

The organisation chart adopted by the CoR Bureau in November 2007 allocates responsibility for relations with interregional groups to Directorate B, Registry and Services to Members, alongside relations with national delegations.

Since the interregional groups are not statutory organs of the Committee of the Regions, the Committee offers interregional groups a limited number of services. For instance, it can make rooms available and can, where necessary, provide interpretation for their meetings if financially and logistically possible, and in accordance with the recommendations issued by the Commission for Financial and Administrative Affairs (CFAA).

The interregional groups' secretariats submit requests for meeting rooms and interpretation to the CoR Registry. Without exceeding the allocation for interpretation decided at the beginning of the budget year by the CFAA, the groups may request interpreting twice a year for a maximum of three languages.

Attendance at interregional group meetings does not entitle members to reimbursement. These meetings are usually short, between an hour and an hour and a half. They are therefore most often held in conjunction with plenary sessions.

Conferences and seminars are sometimes organised at the initiative of interregional groups. If held at the CoR, the rules for events organised by external partners are applied, and the Registry is not involved.

Meetings may not be held concurrently with the CoR's statutory meetings (including those of political groups and national delegations). The organisers also avoid coinciding with other events, so as not to prevent members from attending.

Most groups prefer to hold their meetings on the second day of the plenary session before business begins, generally on Thursday morning from 8 to 9 a.m.

The Registry does not provide follow-up on the content of the interregional groups' activities. Between three and five meetings are usually held in conjunction with the plenary session, either at the CoR premises or outside (in representation offices, for example).

2. Costs

The 2007 budget made no specific provision for interpretation at interregional group meetings. The groups were only put on an official footing by the 2007 Bureau decision. Nonetheless, possibilities for costs to be incurred did exist through the use of the Conferences heading, for instance.

The issue of interregional group meetings, and in particular of the interpretation services provided, was subsequently addressed by the CFAA, which formulated recommendations for the CoR budget.

In the 2008 CoR budget (budget line 1402), the interregional groups were allocated a sum covering an average of two meetings per year for five groups (EUR 32 960).

In 2009, the CFAA maintained its recommendations concerning interregional group meetings, specifying that interpretation could be provided for each group twice a year for a maximum of three languages, subject to budget availability.

The interpretation budget allocated to the interregional groups for 2009 amounted to EUR 40 800, 98% of which was already used by May 2009. In the light of the increasing demand, and of the creation of an additional group with a very high members' participation, the authorising officer authorised expenditures increased by 42% in relation to the budget allocated for interregional groups for the year 2009.

In the 2010 budget, 20 intergroup meetings with interpretation in three languages were planned under the budget line 1402 "Conference interpreters". With the unit cost of EUR 2 616, this brought the total annual cost to EUR 52 320. This amount was intended to cover any extra interregional groups set up in 2010.

Interpretation is provided by the European Commission DG Interpretation or by the European Parliament. When interpretation cannot be provided by either institution the CoR Meetings service

issues specific calls for tender covering the meetings concerned. The unit cost is comparable to the price of the European Commission or European Parliament services; sometimes it is even lower.

Brussels, 22 October 2010

The President of the Committee of the Regions

Mercedes Bresso
