



European Committee
of the Regions

230th Bureau meeting

20 February 2025, 12:00–13:00

Brussels, 10 February 2025

Item 10 a

For decision with debate

Impact of CoR opinions: Executive summary

Submitted by the Secretary-General

The Bureau is asked to:

- approve the 2024 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 61.

Item 10 a Impact of CoR opinions: Executive Summary

Short description

Under Rule 61 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 2024, like that of the previous year, is presented at the first Bureau meeting and plenary session of 2025. Regarding its content, the report is organised around the three political priorities of the CoR's 2020-2025 term of office, along with support for Ukraine, an overarching priority of the CoR, and enlargement.

The 63-page report is presented in item 10b. This executive summary is available in all languages. In addition to these documents, a visually attractive, graphics-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.

1. The CoR's Impact: Current achievements – executive summary

As a consultative body to the European institutions, the central 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 2024, the CoR adopted 53 opinions and 4 resolutions, slightly lower compared to previous years (68 in 2021, 63 in 2022 and 59 in 2023), but higher than in 2019, a year which is comparable to 2024 from the EU inter-institutional cycle perspective.

It is also important to assess how CoR members interact with the representatives of the legislative institutions, specifically the European Parliament (EP) and the Council of the EU (along with its rotating presidency) and the European Commission (EC). Therefore, compared to previous years, more detailed figures per main EU institution were collected for 2024 concerning the impact of the legislative process.

The highest visibility in setting the EU's agenda was the 10th European Summit of Regions and Cities held on 18 and 19 March 2024 in Mons. Local and regional leaders from across Europe and beyond gathered in Mons to shape the agenda for Europe's future, restating their power to deliver and tackle challenges at the local level. The Declaration provided input to the European Council's Strategic Agenda and the European Commission Political Guidelines. The record attendance-levels (3500 in person and 4000 online) showed regions and cities really are the beating heart of Europe and the setting showed how cohesion is synonymous with Europe.

As in previous years, this report describes the progress made with regard to each of the three political priorities of the CoR's 2020-25 term of office and provides examples which confirm that the CoR has maintained its crucial role as the local and regional voice at EU level.

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

- in a record year for democracy across the globe, and as part of the inter-institutional cooperation on the European Parliament elections, a memorandum of understanding was signed with the EP to involve the CoR members and networks in promoting the importance of this vote. With elections at regional and/or local level taking place on the same day in six Member States, nine German Länder and half the townhalls of Italy, around one in four Europeans voted local at the same time as voting European.
- In response to the CoR opinion on the Defence of Democracy, the European Commission recognised the need to further connect the pan-European citizen engagement activities with the local level. In line with the CoR's recommendation, the European Commission committed to organising a session of the European cooperation network on elections dedicated to local and regional elections.
- The fourth edition of the Mayor Paweł Adamowicz Award continued to promote the contribution of stakeholders at local and regional level in the fight against intolerance, radicalisation, hate speech, oppression and xenophobia. For the first time, the chair of the LIBE commission at the European Parliament, Mr Zarzalejos, was part of the jury.
- The need to take account of territorial impacts was fully addressed in the report of the High-level Group on the Future of Cohesion Policy and partly reflected in both the Letta and Draghi reports.
- Following the CoR and the European Commission's Joint Research Centre's activism, Eurostat announced that the 2025 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) monitoring report for the European Semester should integrate a chapter on regional data, providing a more granular evidence base for EU recommendations for Member States reform and integrating regions within the EU effort on SDGs.
- New cooperation agreements with the European Commission and with the European Parliament signed by the CoR include both stronger references to the cooperation on better regulation and subsidiarity.
- Debates at the 11th Subsidiarity Conference (Warsaw, October 2024) went beyond the legal dimension of the principle of subsidiarity and addressed the possible future simplification and centralisation of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), raising concerns about the consistency of such an approach with active subsidiarity.
- The European Commission's DG EMPL report on the European Year of Skills acknowledges the CoR's significant contributions, mentioning the CoR opinions and resolutions on skills policies, while highlighting the CoR's work on skills and the vital role of Local and regional authorities (LRAs) in driving the success of the European Skills Agenda.
- The CoR Network of European Regional and Local Councillors merged with the European Commission's 'Building Europe with Local Councillors' project marking an unprecedented step forward for the Committee and the first time the CoR is directly mentioned in the EC's five-year political programme as a fully-fledged partner. The initiative is also mentioned in the mission letters of all the Commissioners.
- The 2024 Young Elected Politicians welcomed 150 participants representing all EU Member States and five EU candidate countries. Since the programme expanded in 2023, 40 YEPs from all eight candidate countries joined, bringing its total to nearly 1 000 since its inception.

- In 2024, we marked the 30th anniversary of the CoR, launching its celebrations at the Mons Summit. With events and exchanges throughout the year, it culminated in various highlights, such as the handover of our archives to the Historical Archives of the EU, the signature of a cooperation agreement with the European University Institute and the adoption of a resolution during the plenary of November, presenting the vision for the institutional future of the EU.

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

- Strong presence at international climate negotiations at COP29 and shaping global biodiversity policies at COP16. The CoR opinion 'Towards a Global Green Deal' shaped Council conclusions. The CoR is now part of the coordinating committee of the Global Partnership on Subnational and Local Governments for Biodiversity and a recognised partner leading the Local Governments and Municipal Authorities (LGMA) constituency joint position for climate.
- The Green Deal 2.0 report influenced Council conclusions, aligning with the CoR's call for policy synergies, just transition, regional perspectives, and increased investment for local authorities. Elements of its 29 recommendations are reflected in the political guidelines of the new European Commission President and the mission letters of the relevant commissioners.
- Reference, in the Draghi report on 'The future of European competitiveness', to the CoR study on automotive regions, and recognition of the key importance of the transport sector for future EU industrial policy. The CoR's 'Automotive Regions Alliance' (ARA) has been recognised as a key actor in the review of the CO2 standards Regulation for passenger cars.
- Inclusion of key elements of the CoR opinion on Greening Freight Transport package into the draft EP reports on the package. Thanks to the CoR's excellent cooperation with the services of European Commissioners, the pilot calls for the Regional Innovation Valleys (RIV) were launched. This project will bring together like-minded regions to work together on specific policy topics, while strengthening their research and innovation capacity at the same time.
- The CoR initiated and supported the cooperation among regions willing to develop jointly their strategic foresight capacity. As a result, seven regions successfully applied for an Interreg Europe project on foresight. The CoR is also an active participant in the interinstitutional European Strategy and Policy Analysis (ESPAS) network and contributed to the preparation of its Global Trends Report.
- In line with the CoR's advocacy in 2024, the portfolio of the designated Commissioner for Energy and Housing stresses the need for multi-level and multi-actor dialogues and, as suggested by the CoR, puts forward for the first time ever a European Affordable Housing Plan addressing energy poverty and sustainable housing.
- The CoR opinion Towards a resilient water management to fight climate crisis within an EU Blue Deal, advocated for the appointment of a dedicated Commissioner for Water. In line with the CoR's advocacy, President von der Leyen appointed a Commissioner for Environment, Water Resilience, and a Competitive Circular Economy.
- The EU Nature Restoration Law adopted in June 2024 incorporated key points from the CoR opinion: the importance of considering regional and local characteristics in National Restoration Plans, with special attention to the Union's outermost regions, and the involvement of local, regional and managing authorities in the preparation of the Plans.

- CoR Rapporteur on Biodiversity protection and coexistence with large carnivores in Europe was invited for the debate to the Working Party of the EU Council.
- Following the CoR's long-standing demand, the new fiscal rules exclude co-financing of EU programmes, such as structural funds, from the calculations of public expenditure. This will incentivise quality public investment supported by the EU in a context of constrained budgets.
- The rapporteur of the opinion on European Health Data Space drew on her regional experience with electronic health records and translated this policy knowledge into recommendations that found resonance with the EP: several points in the final compromise text directly reflect the amendments proposed by the CoR.
- The EC includes LORDIMAS as a key tool for measuring cities' digital transformation.

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

- Adoption of the opinion on A renewed cohesion policy post-2027 that leaves no one behind in November 2024 contributing to a high level of influence in the debate on the future of cohesion policy, and positioning the CoR as a key stakeholder.
- The Mons Summit was a central platform for the Cohesion Alliance to push for messages on our vision for the future of cohesion policy ahead of the European elections and the renewal of the EU's leadership.
- The Council conclusions on the 9th Cohesion Report, the Strategic Agenda 2024-2029, and the Political Guidelines for the next European Commission 2024-2029, recognise the need for a reinforced and improved cohesion policy and the importance of European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) and of a Just Transition.
- Participation of EC Executive Vice-President for Cohesion and Reforms Raffaele Fitto in the joint meeting of the CoR COTER commission and EP Committee on Regional Development (REGI) at the CoR in December 2024.
- Many recommendations put forward in the CoR opinion on How to exploit the full potential of cohesion policy to tackle demographic change requested by the Council Presidency were taken up by the Council conclusions on the matter that were adopted at the General Affairs Council (Cohesion) on 28 November 2024.
- The revised proposal for a Regulation on a Mechanism to resolve legal and administrative obstacles in a cross-border context largely takes on board the recommendations put forward in the CoR opinion on European Cross-Border Mechanism 2.0.
- Following up on the CoR's proposal contained in the opinion on Zero long-term unemployment: the local and regional perspective¹, the European Commission decided to launch a pilot project committing EUR 23 million from ESF+ to co-finance regions' and/or cities' projects to reintegrate the long term unemployed into the labour market.

¹ SEDEC-VII/037: *Zero long-term unemployment: the local and regional perspective* – rapporteur: Yonnec Polet, (BE/PES) - COR-2022-05490-00-00-AC-TRA.

- In January 2024, the EPOCH practice programme – derived, among others, from the proposals contained in the CoR opinion on homelessness – was launched².
- The opinion on Addressing territorial inequalities by improving access to social services³ fed into and was mentioned in the EPSCO Council Conclusions of 2 December 2024⁴.
- Synergies between the CoR opinion The Common Fisheries Policy on the ground: towards sustainable and resilient coastal communities in the EU and the EP resolution on the Implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy and future perspectives: both institutions plead in favour of a stronger role for local and regional authorities.
- Following a call from the EP and the CoR for a separate Commissioner post dedicated exclusively to fisheries, aquaculture and maritime affairs, the new European Commission 2024-2029 appointed a Commissioner for Fisheries and Oceans.
- The 22nd edition of the European Week of Regions and Cities was an excellent celebration and showcase for Cohesion Policy. Top media coverage and institutional relations positioned the CoR as a central actor in the debate on future MFF and Cohesion Policy, opening a broad debate at European level and attracting media attention on the possible centralisation of the MFF and of Cohesion Policy after 2027.
- Several CoR proposals, as expressed in the [opinion on the Ukraine Facility](#)⁵ adopted in October 2023, found their way into the final regulation adopted by the Parliament and the Council⁶.
- At the Ukraine Recovery Conference (URC) in Berlin, the local and regional dimension was highlighted in an unprecedented way, including through the active participation of several CoR members. The European Alliance of Cities and Regions for the reconstruction of Ukraine had addressed recommendations to the URC and was present with a joint stand (CoR, CEMR, ALDA) in Berlin.
- The CoR and U-LEAD with Europe started a new phase in their long-standing cooperation by launching preparations for the initiative 'Training and internship programme support for Ukrainian Municipalities' (TIPS4UA), which will be implemented in 2025, together with the Ukraine Alliance.
- Following a longstanding request from the CoR, the EU-Albania Stabilisation and Association Council decided to set up a Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) with Albania: a major upgrade in the involvement of Albania's LRAs in the accession process, as JCCs serve as the statutory vehicles for this purpose.
- The European Commission has addressed the CoR's needs and priorities outlined in the opinion EU Enlargement package 2023 – Western Balkans and Türkiye, updating the 'Principles of Public

² Programme chosen to embody the axis of mutual learning and capacity building within the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness. Co-financed by the European Union, the French Interministerial Delegation for Accommodation and Access to Housing (DIHAL) and the King Baudouin Foundation, the programme will last for two years.

³ SEDEC-VII/051: Addressing territorial inequalities by improving access to social services – rapporteur: Declan McDonnell, (IE/EA) - COR-2024-03099-00-00-AC-TRA.

⁴ <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-15610-2024-INIT/de/pdf>.

⁵ CIVEX-VII/025 – The Ukraine Facility – Rapporteur-General: Dario Nardella (IT/PES) – COR-2023-03816-00-00-AC TRA.

⁶ Regulation (EU) 2024/792 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 February 2024 establishing the Ukraine Facility.

Administration' assessment framework to incorporate multi-level and sub-national governance dimensions. In 2024, it was used by SIGMA (Support for Improvement in Government and Management Administration) to assess the situation in the six Western Balkan partners;

- As part of the CoR's 10-point support package for Ukraine and broader commitment to enlargement, the Young Elected Politicians scheme was opened to all candidate countries in the 2024 promotion, office space was offered to Ukrainian Associations and partners, thousands of Ukrainian children were welcomed in the EU in the context of the Summer camps initiative.
- The Working Group on Ukraine continued its work, offering expertise on decentralisation reform and discussing the state of EU accession with representatives from the EU Commission, the Ukrainian government, and local and regional authorities.

In 2024, media and social media communication activities have generated a consistent impact, maximising the CoR's visibility and credibility. In particular, they resulted in around 17 600 media mentions (highest since 2017 when the media monitoring system was implemented at the CoR). On top of the large coverage registered in regional and local media, 2024 has been marked by large quality coverage in main national and European outlets.

The CoR's social networks registered a steady 11.6% growth of followers on the four main channels (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and X, formerly Twitter) and a pilot account on 'Threads' was opened. In 2024, the CoR ran three types of websites: the old institutional website running on SharePoint; a dedicated website for the Mons summit; and the new institutional website running on Drupal, totalling up to more than 1.75 million page views (57 300 opinion views). The new website registered a significant increase also due to the new search engine for opinions, which allows website visitors to search by rapporteur, title, adoption date, adoption status and commission.

The CoR Conference of Presidents (CoP) met with the CoR Commission Chairs to prepare the change of term of office and build on the achievements and recommendations from 2020-2025, including on aspects related to cross-cutting work and bringing the different activities of the CoR together under its Annual Strategic Planning Cycle (ASPC), for greater coherence and impact. The work of the CoR's impact oversight coordinator, in the second half of the CoR term of office, was completed in 2024, measurably contributing to further boosting the CoR's transition to an impact culture.

Furthermore, in 2024, the CoR successfully completed negotiations with the EC and the EP on the revision of its bilateral cooperation agreements, which seek to strengthen inter-institutional cooperation for greater impact. It also achieved an improved cooperation with the Council, having held a debate with its Secretary General followed by an exchange of letters with proposals to this effect.