



**European Committee
of the Regions**

Brussels, May 2025

11th MEETING OF THE CoR-UK CONTACT GROUP

15 May 2025

ITEM 4

**CoR - UNITED KINGDOM CONTACT GROUP
WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE
FIRST HALF OF THE 2025-2030 CoR TERM OF OFFICE**

FOR DECISION

INTRODUCTION

The European Committee of the Regions (CoR) created in 2020¹ the CoR-UK Contact Group as an advisory body under Rule 37 of the Rules of Procedure to address the consequences of the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the EU on local and regional authorities. The Contact Group has been tasked to monitor the implementation of the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement and to act as a forum for continuing dialogue and political partnership between EU local and regional authorities and UK local government and devolved parliaments and assemblies, and to exchange know-how, in particular on cross-border issues.

It remains the only institutional channel to provide opportunities for such a dialogue, as there is no formal role accorded to local and regional authorities under the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA).

Building on the legacy of its first term of office (2020-2025), the Contact Group will continue to provide local and regional authorities with the opportunity to discuss issues arising from the UK's withdrawal from the EU and exploring new opportunities, aiming at further strengthening the relationship between subnational authorities in the EU and the UK.

The Contact Group will examine policies and issues relating to EU-UK relations at sub-national level, both from a thematic and geographical perspective, and may advise the CoR on proposals and recommendations to be sent to the other EU institutions. To this end, it will foster contact at all levels with UK local authorities and devolved administrations and assemblies, as well as with the academic community, civil society and relevant stakeholders. It will also pursue a closer engagement with relevant inter-institutional counterparts, including in the context of the EU-UK Parliamentary Partnership Assembly (PPA).

I. KEY PRIORITIES OF THE WORK PROGRAMME

Taking into account the overall aim to provide a political forum for engagement at subnational level and to mitigate the territorial impact of the UK's withdrawal from the EU, the Contact Group will carry out the following activities:

1. Following the implementation of the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement

Ensuring sustainable local economic development in the framework of the TCA remains one of the main challenges, particularly in view of the Implementation Review of the TCA which must take place before May 2026. EU and UK local and regional authorities need to continue monitoring jointly how the implementation of the TCA affects them and their cooperation, and they must work together to improve opportunities for citizens on both sides, create better conditions for international and local businesses, as well as for exchanges of all kinds, and to convey their positions to decision-makers at different levels.

With both the EU and the UK being firmly committed to the principles of subsidiarity and multi-level governance, local and regional authorities should be better involved in monitoring the implementation of

the TCA, in particular in areas that directly affect their competencies. This requires also an increased representation of sub-national levels from both the EU and the UK in any relevant body to accompany the TCA, notably the EU-UK Parliamentary Partnership Assembly.

To this end, the Contact Group will liaise with all relevant bodies in the EU and the UK, notably with the European Parliament and the UK Parliament.

2. Raising awareness of local and regional concerns

The Contact Group will continue to raise awareness about the wider context of EU-UK relations and in particular about the key role that local and regional authorities need to play in the implementation of the Trade and Cooperation agreement. This entails on the one hand outreach towards EU and UK decision-makers in trying to raise the profile of local and regional authorities and devolved administrations, notably in the bodies set up to oversee the TCA's implementation. On the other hand, the Group will continue raising awareness among local and regional representatives on both sides about the opportunities for, and advantages of, continued cooperation. This should involve special attention on people-to-people contacts, mobility of young people and cooperation with civil society.

3. Supporting cross-border and territorial cooperation

The Contact Group will explore the conditions to re-establish territorial cooperation, particularly cross-border cooperation, between the EU and the UK. The CoR has an important track record and key role developing the instruments for such cooperation both in terms of the framework legislation at European level, and in terms of its practical implementation.

The Contact Group will also focus on thematic priorities and will provide a platform to explore concrete projects of cross-border and inter-regional cooperation in areas such as transport, energy, communication networks, research, culture, education, tourism, migration and health. It will also explore relevant issues in the context of the new Multiannual financial framework and relevant EU funding instruments.

4. Exploring EU-UK cooperation in relevant international fora

In the context of the increased need to strengthen partnerships with like-minded countries on issues of global concern, the Contact Group could explore pursuing a deeper cooperation between EU and UK cities and regions in the multilateral framework. With the aim of developing mutual understanding of global challenges and their implications on the local and regional level, the topics of relevance for the Contact Group could inter alia include environment, energy, climate change, protection of the oceans and international trade.

5. Debating cooperation on key topics

Other specific thematic areas to be covered by the CoR-UK Contact Group will be defined as the work of the Contact Group develops, based on the evolution of the challenges and opportunities in the EU-UK relationship, as well as the global context. The debates will focus on common priorities, the exchange of best practices and areas for concrete cooperation.

II. WORKING MODALITIES OF THE CoR-UK CONTACT GROUP

The work of the CoR-UK Contact Group will complement the activities of the CIVEX commission in external relations policy, as well as of other commissions where relevant, for instance the COTER commission in issues relating to cross-border cooperation, and provide support for policy debates in the CoR plenary where necessary.

The agendas of meetings are proposed by the Chair of the Contact Group, in consultation with the members and UK partners, and meetings may be organised jointly with UK local government and devolved parliaments and assemblies in the light of the subject matter of each meeting.

As a rule, the agenda of each meeting will include:

- a review of the state of play on the implementation of the EU-UK TCA and the role that local and regional authorities play in this context
- one or two thematic debates on specific areas
- any other business, to allow members time to raise questions or topical items based on their first-hand experience, as well as giving rapporteurs on relevant CoR opinions the opportunity to interact with Contact Group members.

The Contact Group shall aim to organise its meetings on the margins of other relevant events, including the CoR plenary and/or the Parliamentary Partnership Assembly, in order to expand its outreach and ensure synergies with a broader range of stakeholders.

Continuing successful established practice in the other bodies the CoR has with non-EU countries, the Contact Group should seek invitations from UK-partners to hold one meeting each year in the United Kingdom, also in order to promote direct interaction with local stakeholders and the exchange of best practices, mutual learning and peer review.

The Contact Group may also organise meetings, or parts of meetings, only among its own CoR members in order to discuss issues relating to the functioning and/or priorities of the Contact Group.

III. MEETINGS FORESEEN FOR THE FIRST HALF OF THE 2025-2030 CoR TERM OF OFFICE

The CoR-UK Contact Group will hold up to two meetings each year, with one of the meetings ideally taking place in the United Kingdom, subject to invitation.

- 1) meeting 1st half 2025: 15 May 2025 (Brussels)
- 2) meeting 2nd half 2025 (UK)
- 3) meeting 1st half 2026 (tbc)
- 4) meeting 2nd half 2026 (tbc)

PROPOSAL:

Members of the CoR-UK Contact Group are invited to adopt the Work Programme and methodology set out in this document.