

EUROPEAN UNION



Committee of the Regions

Making a difference: how regions and cities shape Europe's legislation

Success stories 2010-2011



Preface



Times are difficult for Europe and many doubt the EU's capacity to overcome the current crisis. This is why it is more important than ever to stress that the European Union has been, and continues to be, a success story for the peoples of Europe. Europe's success is rooted in solidarity and the joint effort to increase social and economic development for every European citizen.

The European Union is not the problem, it is part of the solution. The EU has overcome many crises and has shown its capacity to secure stability and prosperity for its citizens in a globalised world. Indeed, the EU member states have never seen such a long period of common political and economic stability and social development.

The Committee of the Regions is convinced that a key factor for success in Europe is that we respect the powers of the different levels of government while recognising that we share responsibility for this continent. Living the "European Way" means combining subsidiarity and solidarity; it means Europe, member states, regions and local authorities working together in multi-level governance.

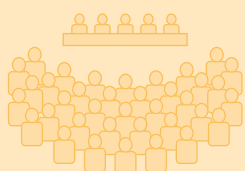
This brochure, based on the Committee's annual impact report presented by Gerhard Stahl, CoR Secretary-General, to its members in June 2011, showcases the concrete contribution of the Committee of the Regions to European legislation in seven specific areas and highlights recent success stories of the institution for 2010/2011.

It contains many examples of ways in which the Committee is influencing the EU legislative agenda, but perhaps the real success is that Europe's lawmakers are increasingly adopting this multilevel governance approach first proposed by the CoR.

Mercedes Bresso
President of the Committee of the Regions

Building Europe in Partnership

Mainstreaming multi-level governance



"Our political action is based on the belief that cooperation between European, national, regional and local levels is essential if we are to build an ever closer and more mutually supportive union among the people of Europe and respond to the challenges of globalisation... We keep watch to ensure that the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality are upheld so the decisions are taken and applied as close to the citizens as possible and at the most appropriate level."

CoR Mission Statement, 21 April 2009



"This is indeed a matter of multi-level governance. Europe is not just about Brussels. Europe is at all levels. It is something we can never repeat too often: the regions do have an essential role to play in the success of Europe 2020."

José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission

Since its creation in 1994 the Committee of the Regions (CoR) has striven to make Europe more democratic and bring it closer to its citizens. Subsidiarity and multi-level governance (MLG) are the key means of achieving this. While subsidiarity determines which level of government is competent, multi-level governance ensures that all relevant levels work together in delivering concrete results on the ground. Even if Europe's institutions still struggle to communicate effectively with the 500 million European citizens, they have, over time, understood that Europe is not built in Brussels alone but has to grow out of the continent's cities, regions and states. The CoR has played a crucial role in mainstreaming this change of attitude and continues to pave the way for a Europe with multi-

level governance at the heart of the policy process.

Building on the achievements of the Lisbon Treaty, the CoR continues to exercise its influence in increasing the respect of subsidiarity and the use of multi-level governance in European policy making. The adoption of the CoR's White Paper on MLG, drafted by rapporteurs

Luc Van den Brande (BE/EPP) and **Michel Delebarre** (FR/PES), both former CoR presidents, has further prompted debate on European governance in several key sectors; from the crucial discussion on economic governance to the governance of future cohesion policy and agricultural policy, as well as the governance of the Europe 2020 Strategy and its "flagship initiatives".

On the initiative of the CoR, many innovative mechanisms have been developed at EU level to involve regional and local authorities (LRA) more and to take better account of the territorial disparities within Europe: macro regional strategies; European groupings for territorial cooperation; European Territorial Pacts that link the different tiers of



"The Commission and the Member States must apply subsidiarity and adopt multi-level governance when developing, negotiating and implementing new policies that might have an impact on local and regional authorities. We are helping to ensure that subsidiarity is applied both at European and local level, and thus ensuring that Europe becomes more democratic."

Ramón Luis Valcárcel Siso (ES/EPP), First Vice-President of the Committee of the Regions and political coordinator of the CoR's Subsidiarity Monitoring Network



government concerned; the structured dialogue with associations of LRAs; city diplomacy; and territorial networks such as the Covenant of Mayors or the CoR's Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform and Subsidiarity Monitoring Network.

The Europe 2020 Strategy and the Commission's Fifth Report on economic, social and territorial cohesion show that multi-level governance has become a leading principle of European policies and the major EU institutions have hailed the important role the CoR plays in promoting MLG.

- The concepts of subsidiarity and multi-level governance and the CoR's role in the process were highlighted in the report **"Project Europe 2030"** drawn up by the Reflection Group on the Future of Europe established by the European Council
- On 17 March 2010 the Council devoted an **informal meeting** to MLG. The participants often referred to the CoR's White Paper and asked the CoR to facilitate the political assessment of the progress of multi-level governance.
- The European Parliament welcomed the CoR's White Paper in its **"Resolution on good governance with regard to EU regional policy: procedures of assistance and control by the European Commission"** (Mănescu Report) adopted on 14 December 2010 taking up many of the CoR's demands.

THE SUCCESS OF THE LISBON TREATY

As a result of the Committee's political impact, the Treaty strengthened the regional and local level in Europe by recognising regional and local self-government (article 4 TEU), by introducing territorial cohesion (article 3 TEU) and by reformulating the principle of subsidiarity as a four-level principle including the European, national, regional and local levels (article 5 TEU). The CoR has got the right to ask the Court of Justice to annul EU laws breaching subsidiarity.



"We will no longer just ask that regional and local authorities are taken into consideration. We will not just be the yes-man. We will enter the political debate with substantial proposals and we will not – if it is required – shy away from political controversy."

Mercedes Bresso (IT/PES), President of the Committee of Regions

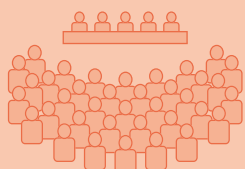
OUTLOOK

During the coming months, the CoR will:

- kick-start the political discussion on the state of play of MLG within the EU with an own initiative opinion and on the drafting of a "European Charter on MLG";
- monitor, via the CoR's Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform, the development of MLG in EU policies such as EU cohesion policy or the delivery of the Europe 2020 Strategy;
- promote territorial pacts as a governance structure best suited to incorporate the local and regional level in the National Reform Programmes of the Europe 2020 Strategy;
- strengthen MLG in its inter-institutional relations by concluding a new cooperation agreement with the European Commission and taking up a regular dialogue with European Council President Herman Van Rompuy;
- organise the Territorial Dialogue in spring 2012 to send a clear political message to the Spring European Council underlining the need to pursue the path of MLG.

Fighting for the future

Securing EU investments in regional development



"We work to secure harmonious and sustainable development across all European territorial areas. In this way, we champion the objectives of economic, social and territorial cohesion in the European Union in the interests of the principles of equity and solidarity."



"A year ago, regional policy at European level was really not in a very good position. ... I think that we have made excellent progress, and I would particularly like to thank the Committee of the Regions for its opinions. Looking at the Commission's mid-term budget review and the 5th cohesion report, the conclusion is clear: regional policy is again at the heart of EU policy."

Johannes Hahn, European Commissioner for Regional Policy

EU cohesion policy is worth 50 billion Euros a year and co-finances thousands of projects of direct benefit to citizens, from high-speed railways and solar power plants to training programmes. Its programming and financing rules expire in 2013 and have to be renegotiated by EU Member States and the European Parliament.

The reform of cohesion policy was one of the key priorities for the Committee of the Regions last year. In April 2010, the Committee became the first European body to issue an official position on the matter following the adoption of its opinion on the Future of Cohesion Policy, drafted by the European affairs state secretary of Saxony-Anhalt, **Michael Schneider** (DE/EPP). A follow-up opinion, also drafted by Michael Schneider, focusing on the contribution of cohesion policy to Europe 2020

the past years the CoR has also maintained its political pressure to increase the importance of urban policies within cohesion policy by adopting three opinions on urban mobility drafted by **Sir Albert Bore** (UK/PES).

The political impact of the CoR in this field has been considerable. The rapporteurs presented the CoR position to Johannes Hahn, European Commissioner for Regional Policy, to the High Level Group of Member States on Cohesion Policy and to the European Parliament's Regional Development Committee. CoR President **Mercedes Bresso** reiterated the CoR's requests at the informal meetings of national ministers in charge of cohesion policy, which took place on 22-23 November 2010 in Liège, Belgium, and on 19 May 2011 in Gödöllo, Hungary. The CoR opinions include recommendations on

Strategy, was adopted in October 2010. On 1 April 2011, the CoR was the first institution to respond to the European Commission's 5th report on economic, social and territorial cohesion, in an opinion drafted by **Michel Delebarre** (FR/PES), Mayor of Dunkerque and Chairman of the CoR's commission for territorial cohesion (COTER). Over



"The CoR and the EP have jointly set the scene for the future of cohesion policy by opposing populist "I-want-my-money-back" attitudes and defending the principle of a cohesion policy accessible to all European regions. Looking at the Commission's proposals on the next EU budget the CoR's success is evident. We are now well prepared for the fight for true multi-level-governance in the future structural fund regulations."

Michel Delebarre (FR/PES), Chair of CoR COTER commission



We insistently request the continuation of a strong and sustainable cohesion policy, a cohesion policy that has something to offer to all local and regional authorities. We believe that cohesion policy is more directly visible and comprehensible to citizens than any other EU policy, and has been an important stimulus for our societies and economies.

Michael Schneider (DE/EPP), CoR rapporteur in 2010 on the Future of Cohesion Policy

the future focus and architecture of cohesion policy which were largely followed by the European Commission in its 5th cohesion report published in November 2010 and by the European Parliament in its resolution on the future of cohesion policy in October 2010 and the "Pieper" Report on the 5th cohesion report adopted in June 2011, as well as in the proposals for a Multiannual Financial Framework for 2014-2020 published on 29 June 2011.

The CoR was also the first to discuss the Commission's cohesion report. Just days after its publication, the Committee brought together Commissioner Hahn and the main European associations representing regional and local authorities for a first exchange of views.

The CoR's main political achievements in the cohesion policy reform debate are:

- **EU support for all regions:** Cohesion policy will remain a policy supporting the development of all regions, with the major share of resources going to the least developed regions.
- **Around 40 "intermediate" regions might benefit from new EU support:** The CoR opinion called for continuous support for "transition regions". These are regions whose economic performance is still below the EU average, but which would see most of their EU funding cut under the current rules. The creation of such a category would implement the principle of territorial cohesion. Following this approach, the Commission suggested a new funding category for "intermediate" regions, which was confirmed in its proposal for a Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020.
- **Safeguarding regional and local prerogatives:** Commissioner Hahn invited the CoR to participate in the working party establishing the objectives and modalities regarding the conditionality of EU cohesion policy funds.

- **Boosting cross-border projects:** Territorial cooperation will continue to be an important element of future cohesion policy.
- **Strengthening the urban dimension of cohesion policy after 2013:** EU funding for integrated urban development strategies will be facilitated.
- EU cohesion policy must not be affected by **macro-economic conditionality** of the Stability and Growth Pact, which applies to central governments.

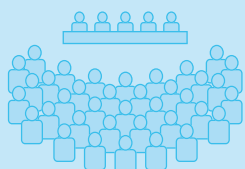
OUTLOOK

During the coming months, the CoR will:

- ➔ continue to contribute to the negotiations on the Regulations on Structural Funds after 2013 through opinions and political lobbying of the CoR rapporteurs;
- ➔ support the European Commission's EU budget proposal for 2014-2020 (336 billion Euros for cohesion policy);
- ➔ call for the inclusion of a "territorial" priority in the EU "menu" for each Operational Programme completing the Europe 2020 strategy thematic priorities;
- ➔ strive to involve local and regional authorities in the drafting of the Europe 2020 Common Strategic Framework at EU level and the Partnership and Investment Contracts at national level;
- ➔ oppose any conditionality based on the Growth and Stability Pact within cohesion policy;
- ➔ organise joint actions with the European Parliament's REGI Committee, ensure the presence of CoR rapporteurs in other EP committees and facilitate the participation of the CoR in the Informal meetings of the Ministers responsible for cohesion policy and territorial development.

Creating Europe on the ground

Cutting red tape in territorial cooperation



"We encourage cooperation between the regional and local authorities of the Member States, but also, as part of enlargement strategy, neighbourhood policy and development policy, with those of candidate countries, potential candidate countries, neighbouring countries and third countries."



Putting sub-national cooperation on an official footing is crucial in building a European identity for citizens in their day-to-day life. By sharing grassroots public services, social amenities and tangible common projects at local and regional level, Europe as a whole will gain in robustness and effectiveness. If we succeed in improving the EGTC so that it becomes the natural instrument for official cooperation between Europe's communities, then we will also have succeeded in planting the seeds for real, smaller-scale European unions to flourish.

Alberto Núñez Feijóo (ES/EPP), CoR rapporteur on the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation

Direct cooperation between regions and cities creates European added-value for citizens. Cross-border cooperation fosters mutual understanding and unlocks economic potential. Public authorities can work together across national borders to finance infrastructure, to design joint development strategies or to provide better services for their citizens.

Developing such cross-border projects can be a difficult and lengthy process, as a study on trans-European cooperation between territorial authorities, commissioned by the Committee of the Regions in 2001, clearly showed. In response, the Committee presented an own-initiative opinion in 2002 calling for a new EU legal instrument for cross-border cooperation. The opinion

urged the European Commission to draw up a stable legal framework for this purpose. Following the Committee's request, the Commission tabled such a proposal in 2003. After intense campaigning by the Committee, Member States and the European Parliament finally adopted the EU regulation establishing the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) in July 2006.

With only a minimum amount of paperwork, public authorities can now set up EGTCs to run their joint projects. These bodies have legal personality under European law, can hire staff, sign contracts and apply for any kind of EU or national funding. **Around 20 such EGTCs have been set up so far**, grouping nearly 500 local and regional authorities in 12 Member States, with many



The external border of the European Union must not be an obstacle for territorial cooperation on the ground. We must explore all possibilities to support and facilitate this cooperation which enhances prosperity, security and cohesion in Europe.

Karl-Heinz Lambertz (BE/PES), CoR member and President of the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR)



The first important thing to know is that the European Commission works hand in hand with the Committee of the Regions on this matter. In fact, we appreciate very much the excellent work done by the Committee, and the continuous support confirmed by its opinions.



Danuta Hübner, former European Commissioner for Regional Policy and current chair of the European Parliament's Regional Development Committee

more in the pipeline. Projects range from the construction of a jointly-managed hospital on the Franco-Spanish border to reinforced cooperation on green energy, health research and student mobility in the Euregio Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino (Austria/Italy).

In summer 2011, the European Commission published a first review of the EGTC rules. The CoR was eager to contribute ahead of the formal adoption of the review with the aim of simplifying procedures further. In January 2011, it already presented its proposals in an opinion drafted by **Alberto Núñez Feijóo** (ES/EPP), President of the region of Galicia. The proposals were based on an extensive consultation of existing EGTCs, regional and local authorities as well as other stakeholders.

One of the key issues raised was the **lack of coordination among Member States**, resulting in a patchwork of different national implementing measures. **The Committee therefore urged clearer guidance from the EU** on how to apply the concept in national law. Another obstacle is that national capitals often take a long time to process requests for setting up EGTCs, and the CoR wants to reduce this. Some EGTCs have also reported problems when applying for EU funding. The Committee therefore called for more information on the concept to be made available to administrations at all levels, including the European Commission. The CoR also repeated its call for a **specific EU funding programme to support fledgling EGTCs** and underlined the **need to facilitate the use of the EGTC at the EU's external borders**.

To follow up its proposals and to feed practical experience back to Brussels, the CoR launched an EGTC Platform, bringing together political representatives, experts and stakeholders.

The European Parliament, in its Resolution on good governance with regard to EU regional policy: procedures of assistance and control by the European Commission (the so-called Mănescu report) of 14 December 2010, congratulated the Committee of the Regions on the quality of its work on the EGTCs. The European Commissioner for Regional Policy, **Johannes Hahn** has invited the CoR to participate in the inter-service group preparing the revision of the EGTC regulation.

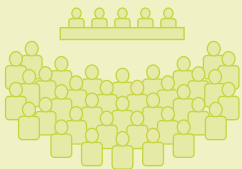
OUTLOOK

During the coming months, the CoR will:

- adopt an opinion on the revision of the EGTC regulation, to influence the future regulation of the European Parliament and the Council amending the current legal text;
- propose an inter-institutional conference on EGTC to foster the dialogue between the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council;
- reinforce its EGTC Platform with more activities and more members, and contribute to the study "EGTC Report 2011" to be published at the beginning of 2012;
- showcase the role EGTCs can play in trans-national multi-level governance;
- promote, via its EGTC Platform, the use of EGTC as a valuable tool for cooperation with local and regional authorities of non-EU Member States, in particular with the EU candidate countries and the members of the Eastern Partnership initiative.

A greener, sustainable future

Addressing Europe's environment and climate challenges



"We work to secure harmonious and sustainable development across all European territorial areas.We set up platforms and networks, organise forums so as to facilitate cooperation and the pooling of experience between regions, cities and municipalities, and develop partnerships with their representative organisations."



In the end, it's out where people live their lives that the solutions will have to be found and implemented. Regions have a huge responsibility and possibility, to do that implementing. I think it's very important that we have an optimal dialogue between the different levels – not only for me to tell them what I think they should do, but more importantly that they can come back and tell me, as a representative from the Commission, where they see the obstacles that prevent them from doing all the things they want to do.

Connie Hedegaard, European Commissioner for Climate Action

Local and regional authorities across Europe have long been responsible for protecting and preserving the environment, and the Committee of the Regions has naturally taken a keen interest in this increasingly important area of EU policy. Although the environment has traditionally been one of the policy areas for which the CoR must be consulted by the other institutions, the Lisbon Treaty added the key issues of energy and climate action to the list of mandatory referrals, a clear indication that European policy-makers recognise the important role played by local and regional authorities in tackling global warming.

The Committee has enthusiastically supported local, regional and European initiatives in this area, notably

the **Covenant of Mayors**, created by the European Commission in 2008 to encourage mayors to go beyond Europe's 20-20-20 goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The CoR not only called upon its members to take the Covenant pledge, but also pushed for the initiative to be opened up to other levels of government – in particular to regions. It has also been the main driving force behind the internationalisation of the Covenant: one of the Committee's key achievements in 2010 was the signing of a **Memorandum of Understanding with the US Conference of Mayors** to work together on tackling climate issues at the local and regional level. Nearly 3000 local and regional authorities from across Europe and beyond have now signed the Covenant pledge.



I very much welcome the good ideas contained in the Baker opinion and I note the CoR's concerns and aspirations. To achieve our environmental goals, all players need to be involved, from the international level right down to grassroots, and I will be playing my part in trying to make that a reality.

Janez Potočnik, European Environment Commissioner



The strong commitment of US mayors to climate protection has been instrumental to placing the issue on the national agenda. Mayors in the US are developing and implementing sustainability plans and comprehensive strategies to protect the environment. The Conference is very pleased to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the Committee of the Regions of the European Union, with the support of the European Commission, to continue our close and strong relationship.



Elisabeth B. Kautz, US Conference of Mayors President

The Committee has also recognised the key role that climate action can play in boosting local and regional economies, adding a Covenant of Mayors strand to its Europe 2020 monitoring platform that tracks the involvement of sub-national governments in the EU's programme for boosting economic growth and creating jobs.

The CoR's wholehearted and proactive support for the European Commission's initiative deepened the relationship between the two institutions in the energy and climate field.

In the field of the environment, Commissioner **Janez Potočnik** was keen to involve local and regional authorities in the development and implementation of future environment policy, following the recommendations of a CoR Outlook Opinion on that issue drafted by **Paula Baker** (UK/ALDE) at the request of the EU presidency.

Closer ties with the European Commission – and a better understanding of the added-value and political legitimacy offered by the Committee in this field – also helped win the CoR a place on the EU delegations to two major UN-led conferences: the COP16 of the UN Convention on climate change in Cancun, Mexico, and the COP10 on the UN Convention on biodiversity in Nagoya, Japan. The CoR's presence at both meetings, and the adoption of strong positions ahead of the meetings (a resolution on climate change ahead of Cancun and an opinion on EU and international biodiversity policy beyond 2010 drafted by **Linda Gillham** (UK/EA)) contributed to significant decisions being taken there:

- **COP 16 in Cancun** agreed for the first time to consider local and regional authorities as governmental stakeholders with regard to international climate change policy implementation and the recognition of the need to engage a broad range of stakeholders at global, regional, national and local levels, including sub-national and local government;
- **COP 10 in Nagoya** adopted a Plan of Action on Sub-national Governments, Cities and other Local Authorities for Biodiversity (2011-2020).

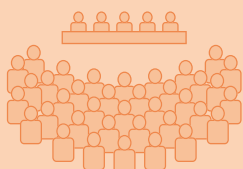
OUTLOOK

During the coming months, the CoR will:

- reinforce cooperation with DG Environment for a better implementation of EU environment policy on the ground; this will include a joint event and cooperation on the European Green Capital Award;
- promote the extension of the Covenant of Mayors to resource efficiency policy;
- follow up the EU's new Biodiversity Strategy in the areas of financing Natura 2000 and green infrastructure;
- contribute to the preparation of the European Commission for reviewing EU air policy within the framework of an Outlook Opinion requested by the the European Commission;
- ensure the recognition of local and regional authorities in the preparations for and outcomes of the United Nations Conference for Sustainable Development in June 2012 (Rio+20).

Forging EU neighbourhood and development policy on the ground

ARLEM, CORLEAP, Decentralised cooperation



"We encourage cooperation between the regional and local authorities of the Member States, but also, as part of enlargement strategy, neighbourhood policy and development policy, with those of candidate countries, potential candidate countries, neighbouring countries and third countries."



“Decentralised development cooperation is the perfect example of the slogan ‘think global, act local’.

Andris Piebalgs,
European Commissioner for Development

The links forged by the CoR with local and regional authorities in the countries bordering the Mediterranean have taken on a new importance in recent months as the European Union redefines its relations with certain Mediterranean countries. It is against this background that the **Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM)**, which was set up in January 2010, has been recognised as a success by the partner countries of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM).

In less than three years, the CoR has emerged, through ARLEM, as a strong partner for the Member States and the partner countries of the UfM. For despite the institutional difficulties and international tensions that have

plagued the UfM at the national level, local and regional representatives continue to reaffirm their commitment to maintaining dialogue and cooperation by calling on the partner states to build on decentralisation as a base for furthering economic, social and territorial development in the region.

From July 2008 onwards, the French presidency of the EU involved the CoR closely in re-launching the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue by inviting **Luc Van den Brande**, the then CoR President, to the meeting of UfM foreign ministers in Paris. The members of the CoR immediately set to work on putting into effect the commitments made in the opinion on the territorial dimension of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, which they adopted in the autumn. The CoR particularly distinguished itself by bringing together the initiatives of associations of regional and local authorities and those of regional networks.

The first meeting of ARLEM, in January 2010, was quickly followed by contacts at the highest level with the UfM general secretariat before the Assembly achieved observer status within the UfM. During 2010, ARLEM's activities matched its partners' expectations, culminating in January 2011, at its second plenary meeting in Morocco, in the

adoption of three reports on the practical aspects of cooperation between the three shores of the Mediterranean, which analysed in particular the challenges of water management and urban development.

Impressed by the success of ARLEM, the Member States invited the CoR to repeat the experiment at the EU's eastern borders. It was the Czech presidency



“To achieve concrete results, the Union for the Mediterranean must not be limited to intergovernmental relations, but must also promote cooperation between territories, which regional and local players are developing with success.

Luc Van den Brande (BE/EPP), Chairman
of the CoR CIVEX commission



“

I believe that further cooperation of the local and regional authorities of Eastern Partnership countries with their European institutional partners, such as the Committee of Regions, will be very positive.

Stefan Füle, European Enlargement Commissioner

of the EU which gave the initial impetus in autumn 2009 by asking the CoR for an opinion on the role of local and regional authorities in the Eastern Partnership.

In its opinion, the CoR decided to support such an initiative. The European Commission echoed this in its communication on the Eastern Partnership Initiative (EaP), in which it encouraged the CoR to set up a “Local and Regional Assembly for Eastern Europe and the Southern Caucasus” so as to develop institutional relations with the six eastern countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

Since then, the CoR has been invited to take part in numerous working meetings. It was during a meeting between the foreign ministers of the EU and the EaP countries in December 2010 that CoR President **Mercedes Bresso** finally announced that the CoR would launch the “**Conference for the regional and local authorities for Eastern Partnership**” (CORLEAP). CORLEAP held its first meeting in September 2011 in Poznan (Poland), under the auspices of the Polish presidency of the EU. The CoR intends to make CORLEAP a forum for multilateral cooperation between regional and local authorities from the EU and EaP countries. This will include political and administrative synergies with the work of EaP Platforms organised by the European Commission, of which the CoR is a permanent member.

Building on the success of the 1st Assises of **Decentralised cooperation** of December 2009, over 600 representatives of local and regional authorities from the EU and developing countries, together with representatives from the EU institutions, met on 29 and 30 March 2011 at the Committee of the Regions for the second Assises, organised jointly by the CoR and the European Commission. The event brought together

representatives of local and regional authorities from the EU and developing countries to exchange views, engage in political dialogue with relevant European institutions on cooperation for development and reinforce aid effectiveness through a multi-level governance approach.

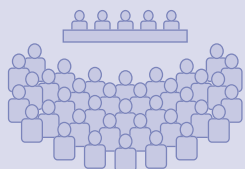
OUTLOOK

During the coming months, the CoR will:

- organise on 30 January 2012 the third ARLEM plenary session in Bari, Italy, which will adopt 4 thematic reports (**Nichi Vendola (IT/PES)** on desertification and climate change in the Mediterranean; **Michel Lebrun, (BE/EPP)** on renewable energy in the Mediterranean; **Fathallah Oualalou, mayor of Rabat (Morocco)** on the role of small and medium-sized enterprises in the Mediterranean; **Asim Güzelbey, mayor of Gaziantep (Turkey)** on preserving and enhancing heritage sites around the Mediterranean.);
- prepare an action plan for future CORLEAP work and develop an exchange of examples of good practice;
- further disseminate information about the projects and work undertaken by local and regional authorities in the framework of ARLEM and CORLEAP;
- present, in partnership with the European Commission, the Internet Portal of Decentralised cooperation during the Open Days 2011 and
- organise the 3rd edition of the Assises of Decentralised Cooperation in 2012.

A citizen-friendly Europe

Making the Citizens' Initiative less bureaucratic



"Our mission is to involve regional and local authorities in the European decision-making process and thus to encourage greater participation from our fellow citizens...We play our part in promoting European democracy and citizenship and their values..."



Drawing from their vast experience regarding citizens' initiatives in our Member States, regions and cities will play a role in initiating, federating and carrying forward European Citizens' Initiatives. This will make Europe more transparent, democratic and diverse.

Mercedes Bresso (IT/PES), President of the Committee of the Regions

citizens of Europe – it should be as clear as possible.

At the beginning of 2010 therefore, recognising the vitality of local and regional democracy in Europe, both the Council and the European Parliament asked the Committee of the Regions for its opinion on the best way of implementing this new instrument. On taking up office in February 2010, the new President

The Citizens' Initiative, introduced under the Treaty of Lisbon, is intended to represent a new form of public participation in European Union policy-making. It enables European citizens to call directly upon the Commission to propose legislation, provided the request is backed by not less than one million citizens who are nationals of a significant number of Member States.

The members of the CoR see this as a further step towards participatory democracy at European level. However, for the Citizens' Initiative to be understood and taken on board by those most concerned by it – the

of the CoR, **Mercedes Bresso**, personally stressed that the CoR would assume its responsibility in the practical implementation of the Citizens' Initiative.

Although the Committee's support for the principle itself was definitive, it was particularly keen for the measure to be made more accessible to the citizens than the European Commission proposal initially allowed. Fearing that the complexities of the procedure would prevent people from using it, the Committee, in partnership with the European Parliament, called for a relaxation of the requirements for introducing a Citizens' Initiative.



The European Citizens' Initiative gives a new dimension to European democracy. For the first time, this instrument allows European citizens to let us, European decision-makers, know whether they are satisfied with the way we do our work. If they are not satisfied, they can then suggest another course of action, which is a huge step forward. We have worked hard for a simple, user-friendly and widely communicated regulation. Now it's up to the citizens to make the most of it

Zita Gurmai MEP, European Parliament rapporteur on the European Citizens' Initiative



The European Citizens' Initiative activates the right of citizens to participate directly in the democratic life of the Union and represents a milestone in the consolidation of democracy in the EU. By making the European Citizens' Initiative accessible to ordinary people, active public participation in the European Union is closer to becoming a reality

Sonia Masini (IT/PES), CoR rapporteur on the European Citizens' Initiative

The CoR's rapporteur, **Sonia Masini**, President of the Province of Reggio Emilia (IT/PES), has worked in close cooperation with her counterpart at the European Parliament, **Zita Gurmai** (HU/SD), who invited her to present her proposals at a meeting of the relevant Parliament committee.

One of these proposals, contained in the opinion adopted by the CoR, was that the **"significant number" of Member States required to support the initiative should be one quarter of Member States, rather than the one third proposed by the European Commission.** In this regard, the members of the CoR were in agreement with many MEPs, and together they were able to amend the final version of the legislation.

This is not the only proposal from the CoR taken up by the co-legislators. The obligation for the European Commission to respond officially to the presenters of a Citizens' Initiative and the requirement for transparency as to their sources of funding was also requested by the members of the CoR.

As a result of this close cooperation with the European Parliament, based on shared goals, the Committee of the Regions has been able to achieve its objective of making the Citizens' Initiative accessible to as many people as possible.

The procedures for the European Citizens' Initiative were adopted by the Regulation of 16 February 2011. From that point onward citizens will be able to register their proposals for EU initiatives. Regional and local authorities have long been active in reinforcing citizens' participation within their constituencies and have experimented with

new forms of participatory and direct democracy, including local or regional citizens' initiatives. The entry into force of the European Citizens' Initiative will strengthen their commitment to communicating Europe's priorities and achievements on the ground and to reinforcing citizen participation in European democracy.

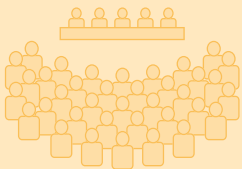
OUTLOOK

During the coming months, the CoR will:

- ➔ be active in raising awareness for the new instrument, in disseminating information about its use and take on a leading role in the organisation of hearings on certain initiatives, which are of a particular interest from a local and regional point of view;
- ➔ continue to work on enhancing citizen participation in shaping EU policies. To that effect it will cooperate with all EU institutions and bodies in the organisation of information campaigns and communication events and will assume a key role in the organisation of the forthcoming European Year for Citizenship 2013.

Preserving Europe's cultural diversity

Involving regions and cities in the European Heritage Label



"We want to see Europe, united in diversity in a globalised world, make the very most of its territorial, cultural and linguistic diversity, as this is the source of its strength and guarantee of its people's identity."

In 2010, the European Commission proposed to better promote the continent's shared heritage through a new label. Even though regional and local authorities play a crucial role in managing and financing heritage sites, the original Commission plans did not involve them at all. The Committee of the Regions ensured that regions and cities get a say in designing and awarding the "European Heritage Label".

The Committee of the Regions adopted its opinion on the subject in June 2010, only three months after the Commission had presented its proposal. CoR rapporteur **Mireille Lacombe** (FR/PES), Member of Puy-de-Dôme General Council, summed up the reaction of Europe's mayors and regional presidents when she described the lack of grassroots involvement in the original plans as "incomprehensible". The CoR also expressed its disappointment that the initiative was only open to

EU Member States, and proposed to open it up to neighbouring countries.

The **European Parliament backed several of the points raised by the Committee**. Its resolution of 16 December 2010 stated that:

- future evaluations of the label could examine enlarging the initiative to third countries participating in the EU's "Culture" Programme;
- reporting duties of the Commission should be extended towards the CoR;
- the CoR should to be involved in the final selection process of candidates through a CoR member participating in the European selection panel;



"I welcome the EU's proposal to create a new European Heritage Label, which I think will be a useful tool for helping to create a sense of local and regional identity both in the 27 Member States and beyond. Europe has many human and geographical assets that form a distinctive European heritage that is still largely unknown. The European Heritage Label will recognise such places and the people who live there and help to share common values with others."

Mireille Lacombe (FR/PES), CoR rapporteur on the European Cultural Heritage Label



Adding a member by the Committee of the Regions [to the selection panel] was recommended in my report, as that would give voice to the local and regional authorities, and thus make it more representative and also attract local and regional interest.

Chrysoula Paliadeli (GR/S&D), European Parliament rapporteur on the European Cultural Heritage Label
(Source: www.Generation112.eu)

- the European jury should have more room for selection decisions.

The European Parliament and the Council agreed on the details of the new law in subsequent negotiations. The compromise, adopted on 19 May 2011 by EU Member States, confirmed two of the Committee's key demands by declaring that:

- the CoR shall have one seat on the European selection panel carrying out the selection and monitoring procedure at the European level to award the European Heritage Label;
- the CoR shall be kept fully informed about the European Commission's activities regarding the European Cultural Heritage Label and shall be consulted on the evaluation report to be established by the European Commission.

The first sites to carry the new Label will be announced in 2013. The initiative complements other cultural heritage initiatives, such as the UNESCO world heritage list or the Council of Europe Cultural Routes. It will be awarded to sites that have played a vital role in the history of the European Union. These will be selected for their symbolic value of European integration, rather than their beauty or architectural quality. The Label also places emphasis on the educational dimension of these sites, especially for young people.

OUTLOOK

During the coming months, the CoR will:

- take up the work in the panel during the final selection process at Union level by appointing a European panel member;
- reinforce cooperation with the European Commission in terms of receiving information about implementing the labelling process and monitoring sites;
- ensure the involvement of local and regional authorities in the choice of sites and the implementation, monitoring and assessment of events;
- strive to open the European Heritage Label scheme, after the initial appraisal stage, to third countries in Europe, in particular to enlargement and neighbourhood countries.

European leaders on the Committee of the Regions



The European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions have always collaborated on very friendly terms. We need the regional input into the European lawmaking process, as local and regional authorities represent, very often, the level where this legislation is implemented. The Committee of the Regions has always delivered this.

Jerzy Buzek, President of the European Parliament



I see my role as a unifying role. Working with the Committee of the Regions is part of that role. It is an opportunity to hear and reflect your views in the conclusions that I will present to the Heads of State and Government.

Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council



We cannot win the hearts and minds of citizens without the leadership of regional and local representatives that have to contribute to promote Europe. You are essential relays for the Union. From the beginning, my objective has been to deliver the Europe 2020 strategy with a wide range of partners, including the Committee of the Regions. We are very much in favour of your idea of territorial pacts. I will push Member States to accept involvement of all parties in territorial pacts.

José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission

September 2011

EUROPEAN UNION



Committee of the Regions

Edited by the Secretary General of the Committee of the regions

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