



**European Committee
of the Regions**

**Report on the implementation of the Cooperation
Agreement between
the European Parliament and
the European Committee of the Regions**

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1. Introduction

On 5 February 2014, the Presidents of the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) and the European Parliament (EP) signed a cooperation agreement. This agreement was accompanied by an "Annex on administrative cooperation" (Annex I. The agreement also included a second annex on the "Budgetary scenario [concerning the] staff transfer from the Committee to the European Parliament" with an overview of the financial impact of the agreements.

The Cooperation Agreement had an explicitly political focus for cooperation "in order to reinforce the democratic legitimacy of the European Union and contribute to the Treaty objective of pursuing territorial, social and economic cohesion in the Union" as well as to "ensure the respect of the subsidiarity principle". The agreement outlined a number of measures to be taken to achieve this overall goal. It should be stressed that a political and logistical cooperation was in place between the CoR and the EP even before the Cooperation Agreement was signed. In this sense, the agreement has contributed to creating a more effective and focused framework for political cooperation between the Parliament and the CoR. The "Annex on administrative cooperation", on the other hand, mainly concerned the implementation of extended practical cooperation in areas such as translation, access to buildings and canteens, security and IT, also including the EESC and the joint services between the CoR and the EESC.

Whilst the cooperation agreement itself does not make reference to monitoring of progress, it is stated in Annex I that the agreements "proper implementation [...] will be followed up on an annual basis by the Presidents or his/her representative supported by their respective Secretary Generals". Furthermore, in its discharge resolution for 2013, the EP expressed its expectation that "the agreement will evolve in a balanced way, benefit all three institutions equally, and contribute positively to the further rationalisation of resources". The EP also called "on each of the institutions, at the end of the first year of their collaboration, to make an individual assessment of the impact that the agreement is having in terms of both human resources and of expenditure, synergies, added value, and substantive quality." . In the 2014 discharge resolution, the EP invited the CoR and EP "to examine whether further synergies that enhance productivity in the domains covered by the cooperation agreement can be found and asks to be kept informed of developments in this regard;"

This report has been drawn up in response to these demands and offers information on the implementation of the cooperation agreement and its annexes.

2. Implementation of the Cooperation Agreement

This section summarises first results and output of the enhanced cooperation between the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) and the European Parliament in 2016. A more elaborative note can be put forward once the Annual Impact and Annual Activity Reports have been finalised and adopted by the CoR Bureau in 2017.

The cooperation between the CoR and the EP takes place at several levels:

- CoR Bureau and the EP Conference of Commission Chairs, represented by their Presidents
- EP Committee/CoR Commission level
- EP/CoR rapporteurs
- CoR and EP secretariats (DG IPOL and EPRS)

The CoR President Markku Markkula and the Chair of the Conference of Committee Chairs of the European Parliament Jerzy Buzek met on 8 November 2016 to consider the progress in political cooperation between the EP and the CoR over the last 18 months.

Both parties positively assessed the development of the cooperation between institutions and relationship-building between members and emphasised the will to further deepen this cooperation in the future:

- Political co-operation should be further developed and it should take place 1) at CoR/CCC Presidents' level, 2) at EP Committee/CoR Commission level and 3) between EP/CoR rapporteurs, respecting the autonomy and the specific approaches used by each Committee/Commission.
- Mr Buzek invited the CoR President to take part in a CCC meeting in March/April next year and he expressed his willingness to attend a future CoR Bureau meeting. President Markkula has accepted the invitation.
- Mr Buzek invited the CoR to play a bigger role in contributing to the drafting of EP implementation reports for which the EP has introduced a new working approach. The CoR networks and expertise could provide valuable input to the fact-finding activities of rapporteurs on how EU legislation is working at local and regional level. The example of CoR online consultations has been raised.
- A closer cooperation between the CoR and the EP in organising fact finding missions in cities and regions and in providing input in the EP implementation report on EU legislation has also been raised.
- Beyond the cooperation on legislative files, further efforts to promote communication and information activities could be explored by the responsible services based on the currently used pragmatic approach.

Mr Buzek reported the above outcome to the Conference of Committee Chairs at their meeting of 22 November 2016, mentioning also that the CoR side would like to see more systematic approach to the cooperation.

The CoR is very committed to cooperation with the EP, and progress can be seen between some EP Committees and CoR Commissions.

Areas of political cooperation

In 2016, subsequent to the work launched in 2015 and to the letter of Mr Buzek to Mr Markkula on 15 February 2016 and the follow-up meetings between the CoR Secretary General and the EP Director General, further progress was sought the following areas in the following areas identified by the EP Committees for intensified cooperation:

- The Energy Union
- The Digital union
- Horizon 2020 – mid-term review
- Smart Specialisation Strategy
- The revision of the Multi-annual Financial Framework
- A consideration of the reform of the system of EU own resources
- Budgetary measures in relation to the refugee crisis
- Monitoring the EIB's implementation of EFSI. Especially as regards the balance between the additionality requirement and prudent financing
- A mid-term report regarding EIB's external mandate
- The Structural Reforms Support Programme
- A review of the Partnership agreements and operational programs.

At the meeting of 8 November 2016, the following topics were considered for further cooperation in 2017:

- the implementation of the Energy Union (particularly with regard to the gas and electricity market design) and the Digital Union,
- the experiences gained with the HORIZON 2020 programme at local and regional level (big differences between the EU regions) in view of the next generation of the framework programme
- the future Innovation Policy of the EU,
- the discussion on the next MFF post 2020 (distinct importance of the EU funds for different regions)
- the role of the EIB and EFSI at local and regional level,
- the effect of the Structural Support Programme and the implementation of the partnership principle in ESIF programmes and

- International cooperation - the future of trade agreements of the EU and the constructive involvement of European regions in this process.
- Space policy could be also a topic as one of the priorities of ITRE Committee.

Further details on progress made in 2016 on the files for enhanced cooperation is provided in annex III to this report.

Cooperation with the European Parliament Research Service (EPRS)

On 19 October 2016, the CoR Secretary General met with the EPRS Director-General accompanied by the respective directors in order to discuss possibilities for further improving the cooperation. This meeting was followed-up in a management working meeting on 9 December 2016, between the CoR secretariat and the EPRS.

In view of optimizing cooperation, the output of this working meeting can be recapped as follows:

- Prioritise bilateral cooperation:
- follow the prioritization of cooperation on policies as developed with the EP Committees and DG IPOL
- follow-up on the 6 policy themes presented by CoR commissions and bilaterally discussed with EPRS, with clear commitment from both parties
- Elaborate on a provisional timeline to bilaterally discuss and provide feedback on policy themes at an early stage when needed, even before the final adoption of CoR opinions
- Contribute to develop a working method streamline the territorial dimension into EPRS policy briefings and other products
- Enhance the visibility of the cooperation by engaging CoR representatives in events organised by the EPRS and vice-versa
- Enhance the use of EPRS services by the CoR with regard to study requests and make use of EPRS mapping and infographics for CoR rapporteurs (also take note of the upcoming CoR study programme for 2017)
- Extend the scope of cooperation beyond studies and focus also on the preparation of selected EP implementation reports for which DG IPOL has suggested to consult the CoR more systematically
- Agree on enlarging cooperation to include certain horizontal and strategic issues (eg. Brexit, MFF, future of Europe)
- Build on the potentiality of expanding the use and users of online tools managed by both parties (eg. EPRS members' hotline, CoR Kiklos).

Specific cooperation and links maintained between CoR commission secretariats and the EPRS:

- On technical level the COTER secretariat and the EPRS SPOL is liaising on supporting the on-going discussion on the future of Cohesion Policy with a series of EPRS briefings looking into specific topics (e.g. Simplification, Budget focused on results, Complementarity of ESIF and EFSI etc.)
- The COTER secretariat has developed strong links with the EPRS Structural Policies Unit (SPOL) on its key dossiers, such as Urban agenda, Simplification, Urban mobility, Sustainable mobility and Cohesion Policy instruments, and with the EPRS Budgetary Policies Unit (BPOL) on its key dossiers, such as the MFF review/revision and EU own-resources. The objective is not only to obtain information from EPRS but ensure that COTER work and activities are better recognised in EPRS material in order to promote visibility of our work.
- The ECON secretariat has a very good cooperation with the Economic Policy unit of EPRS.
- The secretariat of the SEDEC uses the expertise of EPRS in three possible ways: 1) targeted studies and infographics related to the DSM strategy, as well as other topics such as innovation, employment, social policy, education and culture, 2) building better relation with the STOA and other units, in order to deal with the more technical priorities of the Knowledge Exchange Platform (KEP) on bio-economy and KETs, and 3) carry out some joint trainings for our members (as well as those of the EP) on the use of EPRS resources.
- The NAT commission has a very good cooperation with the EPRS unit dealing with Fisheries and Maritime affairs, including an agreement to send to EPRS all relevant input from the CoR, participation in mutual events and input to the EPRS papers (one factsheet so far on integrated maritime policy).
- In the area of the CIVEX commission, the EPRS prepared for an ad-hoc analysis of the employment regulatory framework for refugees and asylum seekers in 8 member states CIVEX has a good working cooperation with the XPOL unit on issues related to enlargement and EU neighbourhood and development cooperation. The input coming from the CoR networks (Arlem, Corleap) is very interesting for the policy briefings issued by EPRS in relation to Eastern and Southern neighbourhood. These areas offer a good potential for a further joint work.

3. Implementation of the Annex on Administrative Cooperation

This annex includes a number of measures that should be implemented – first and foremost a transfer of a significant number of CoR staff members from the CoR and EESC translation service to the EPRS. The following points concern these various aspects.

3.1 Transfer of staff

With a view of reinforcing the political and administrative cooperation the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions are prepared to contribute to the building up of

the Members Research Service [...]. The transfer of staff involved will be based on a joint process and on a voluntary decision of the staff of the Committees' translation service concerned [...] and should involve AD and AST/AST-SC grades with a target of 3:1. The modalities of transfers will be jointly agreed.

It is also mentioned in the annex that the "maximum staff number to be transferred shall be 80" (see footnote 3). As Annex II shows, this number was at an early stage reduced to a target of 60 taking into account the voluntary basis of this exercise. The distribution ratio between the EESC and the CoR was set at 3:2, which translated into 36 posts for the EESC (27 ADs/9 ASTs) and 24 posts (18 ADs and 6 ASTs) for the CoR. The transfers from the CoR have taken place on a voluntary basis and were operated following a two-step approach: first selection for a secondment in the interest of the service to DG EPRS for a period of 6 months in accordance with Art. 38 of the Staff Regulations, with possibility to request to be permanently transferred to EP thereafter pursuant to the provisions of article 8 of the Staff Regulations.

The transfers were organised gradually, as follows:

- 1 October 2014: 8 ADs were seconded and subsequently transferred to the EP
- 1 January 2015: 3 ADs + 1 ASTs were seconded and subsequently transferred to the EP
- 1 October 2015: 8 ADs + 4 ASTs seconded to the EP. ; 1 AST subsequently decided to return to the CoR at the end of the secondment period, to be replaced in the redeployment exercise by 1 AD on the reserve list, bringing the final division to 9 ADs + 3 ASTs permanently transferred.

It follows that since 2016, the staff transfer operation (of a total of 24 posts: 20 AD and 4 AST) has been fully implemented, as was also confirmed in the course of the budget procedure for the budget 2017.

3.2 Workload balancing, outsourcing and rationalisation in the translation services

The translation services of the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions agree on a comprehensive and binding system of workload balancing, providing for mutual support in times of peaks and heavy workload in order to preserve the working conditions of the staff and to maintain high standards.

The quantity of services rendered will be balanced out in terms of number of pages over the year based on a mutual understanding of the method of counting. The Economic and Social

Committee and the Committee of the Regions will have access to the EP framework contracts for external translations.

The translation services of the three institutions have agreed on a system of workload balancing as foreseen in the cooperation agreement. As workload balancing is best ensured by close contacts at unit level, heads of units in the two services exchange information about spare capacity and share work when possible. Experience shows that such cooperation is most efficient in relation to translation of shorter documents of an urgent character. Units also provide each other with ad hoc assistance to cover less common language combinations to avoid translation via a third language. Information on language combinations on offer is exchanged at central level.

The CoR and EESC translation service has developed a SharePoint platform for exchange of tasks in an efficient and user-friendly manner. This platform is available to all institutions and has been a key factor in workload balancing. Following the CoR and EESC's example, the Parliament has given translation units direct access to this platform, which is expected to lead to further increase in synergies between the two sides (EP's Directorate-General for Translation and the EESC/CoR DIR T).

Between January and October 2016, the CoR and EESC's translation service translated some 2080 pages for the EP and sent around 368 pages (of which 131 from the CoR) to other institutions to be translated (out of which 44 to the EP). A common method of counting was put in place with the KIAPI system in 2012.

The high standard of translations has been maintained throughout this process.

Budgetary means used up to now for the staff members to be transferred remain available for the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a long term basis in order to guarantee sustainability and autonomy of Committees' translation services. They will be dedicated primarily for outsourcing of translation services and for the remaining part to improve the political input of the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions.

The EESC/CoR had access to EP framework contracts for outsourcing of translation already before 2014. In view of the additional budgetary means for outsourcing which became gradually available as a consequence of the staff transfers described under 3.1, the CoR and EESC translation service has introduced measures for stepping up outsourcing without interruptions to the working cycle of the Committees. Taking into account existing staffing level and the need to adapt workflows, the

outsourcing target was 10% in 2015 (reached), 15% in 2016 (currently 17%) and 20% in 2017. Reaching these targets will be facilitated by the new translation outsourcing framework contracts concluded in cooperation with the European Parliament.

In 2016, out of an initial budget of 2 722 010 EUR (CoR; 1 097 200 € and EESC; 1 624 810 €) on this budget line (item 1420), about 42% is expected to be used on outsourcing (47% after deducting interinstitutional projects from the total initial budget). The surplus results, on the one hand, from the rationalisation measures taken (in particular, systematic pre-processing of outsourced translation requests) and, on the other hand, from the lower prices for outsourcing under the current framework contracts. With the above mentioned outsourcing target of 20% in 2017, it is expected that appropriations on budget line 1420 will be increasingly used as of 2017, even much more if, for operational reasons, outsourcing targets have to be reviewed upwards.

In terms of using unspent appropriations to strengthen the political input of the CoR, see point 4.

The Parliament takes note that the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions have decided to implement Resource Efficient Multilingualism (REM) with regard to their translation services.

REM is being implemented and will be continued in the framework of the latest administrative cooperation agreement between the CoR and EESC, which entered into force on 1 January 2016. As a result of REM, an extensive rationalisation of translation demand has been achieved: fewer and shorter documents are being translated into fewer languages. Further measures to rationalise working methods and workload will be taken, also as a means to offset reductions in staff. Outsourcing is part of the REM measures.

3.3 Reinforcement of political core functions

[Implementation of REM] frees up an important number of staff in order to reinforce [the Committees'] political and legislative role at EU level as well as to strengthen the inter-institutional synergies with the EP.

In view of strengthening the cooperation with the European Parliament the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions decided to reinforce their respective political core functions by way of redeploying empty posts and by launching an internal mobility exercise.

Especially in times of staff reduction, it is important that staff allocation duly reflects the institutions' evolving strategic priorities. It follows that the CoR pursued its efforts to strengthen its core services operating in direct support of the political activities of the Committee.

Thus, in addition to the staff transfers to the EP, also an internal mobility exercise was organised, first in 2014, which resulted in the gradual internal redeployment of 9 colleagues from the translation services (6 AD and 3 AST) to the CoR own services by January 2015, and then in 2016 resulting in the gradual redeployment of 4 colleagues from the translation services (all AD) to the own services by October 2016. Further calls for interest are foreseen for 2017 and 2018 subject to the annual assessment of workload and productivity levels in the translation services as provided for in the administrative Cooperation Agreement with the EESC entering into force on 1 January 2016.

Furthermore, a new organisational chart was approved by the CoR Bureau on 15 April 2015 and implemented as from 16 July 2015. The changes in the organizational chart are driven by the following key priorities:

- 1) Make services better accessible to Members, by reducing and simplifying the « points of access » into the administration (one-stop shop).
- 2) Increase political impact and follow-up along the full legislative cycle, by reinforcing medium- to long-term agenda planning and by integrating functions into dedicated thematic Units for each of our commissions' secretariats.
- 3) Clarify distribution of tasks across Directorates, Units and staff, by reducing overlaps and better defining responsibilities for Deputy Directors, Head of Units, administrators and assistants for their remits of competence. Job descriptions of all staff members were updated and are being uploaded in SysPer (HR management tool).
- 4) Enhance communication (internal, external) exploiting digital means, by reinforcing our press-officers' team, and by thinking more digital.

In 2016, 4 additional AD posts will be converted and assigned to political groups and to the cabinet of the President. Early 2017, 2 additional AD posts and 3 contract agents will also be allocated to the political groups in order to support their activity and meet the political priorities of the institution.

3.4 Access to buildings and security

The direct access possibilities between the buildings Remard and Remorqueur and Bertha von Suttner and Atrium will be reopened. The feasibility of a reopening of the tunnel linking the Jacques Delors and Paul Henri Spaak buildings will be examined.

The passage between the Committees' Remorqueur building (REM) and the EP's Remard building was opened on 21 January 2015. EP provided the funding for guarding the passage. However, following the events of November 2015, when the alert state in Belgium was raised to level IV and subsequently lowered to level III, the passage was closed and have not been reopened since, except during the EESC/CoR plenary sessions, taking place in the EP.

A tunnel linking the CoR and EESC's Jacques Delors building (JDE) and the EP's Paul-Henri Spaak building (PHS) is not considered a realistic option at this stage.

If the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions so wish, Parliament is ready to provide the physical security (guards service) for the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions as well in order to establish a common security parameter. This will allow for free circulation between the respective buildings. The Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions will provide clear guidelines concerning their security needs to be respected. The price charged will not exceed the current costs in constant prices.

All EU institutions are cooperating closely on security, which is particularly important in the present security situation. All institutions have made an important effort for gradually aligning security standards whilst maintaining institutional autonomy, such as with regard to alert states. The CoR and EESC have not asked the European Parliament to provide physical security for them so far, in particular in the present situation when quick adaptations of security measures may be required.

3.5 Interpretation and meeting rooms

As of the new legislature starting on 1 July 2014 Parliament commits to make appropriate meeting space available over and above the current slots provided by extending its offer.

Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee and the European Committee of the Regions have jointly checked about the changes that are necessary in the conditions of service in order for Parliament to become the standard provider of interpretation services for the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions and have agreed to wait until new working conditions for interpreters at the European Parliament make them more competitive towards the SCIC. At the time being, EP interpreters are sometimes 50% more expensive than SCIC interpreters.

The CoR signed an administrative cooperation agreement related to the provision of interpretation services with the EP already in November 2012. Services are at present mainly related to interpretation during the CoR's Plenaries, External Bureau Meetings or Summits. The CoR and the EP have further extended these services to other meetings of CoR bodies with symmetric language combination because asymmetric combinations – and most meetings of CoR bodies are – are still much more expensive with EP interpreters than SCIC interpreters.

Since the signature of the Cooperation Agreement, the EP has agreed in 2015 and again in 2016 – to grant the use of the Main Chamber for three Plenaries organised by the CoR and not only two as foreseen by the Rules governing the use of EP's premises by Outside bodies (EP Bureau decision of 14 march 2000), on an exceptional basis from 2016 onwards. A similar request has been made for 2017. Further changes are being explored – jointly with the EESC – for the future for the use of the EPs meeting rooms, after having made a proper analysis of the prices paid in exchange of quality services. It should be noted however that having our Plenary in the JAN building is subject to some uncertainty as EP Political Groups can request back their dedicated room any time.

3.6 Informatics

The European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions agree on intensified cooperation in the area of informatics in order to increase synergies.

The EP consistently offers the CoR and the EESC the opportunity to participate in calls for tender organised by the European Parliament in terms of IT services. This is very valuable to the CoR as it allows to manage calls for tenders with fewer human resources involved. Besides, the bids in such joint calls for tender are generally lower than they would be if the CoR were to organise similar calls for tender on its own or only together with the EESC.

Wi-Fi coverage for members of the CoR during plenary sessions in the EP buildings has been improved thanks to good cooperation, but further efforts need to be made to simplify the procedures. The CoR would like to move ahead as well with federated Wi-Fi authentication.

The CoR's administrative IT systems (jointly managed with the EESC) are relatively closely aligned (or even integrated) with those of the European Commission. The natural scope for intensified cooperation in this area is therefore limited, without major investments. Nevertheless, different areas of possible intensified IT-based cooperation, for example in support of legislative planning, could be explored with the EP in 2016.

In addition, the CoR and the EP are looking into applications that will facilitate the mutual transparency of their respective work throughout the entire legislative cycle.

3.7 Canteens

The European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions agree on the mutual access to their canteens on the same conditions as for their own members and staff.

The canteens of the EP and the CoR and EESC are now opened to all their staff on the same basis. Moreover, the three Institutions have jointly organized a joint call for tender for a new catering contract.

3.8 Annual follow-up

The proper implementation of this agreement [= Annex I] will be followed up on an annual basis by the Presidents or his/her representative supported by their respective Secretary Generals.

See point 2. In addition to this, the CoR secretary-general continued monitoring the implementation of the Cooperation Agreement in regular meetings with the secretary-general of the EP.

4. The budgetary implications of the Cooperation Agreement (Annex II)

The main impact on the CoR budget has been connected to the gradual transfer of staff to the EPRS. In 2015, the budget for salaries was reduced and in turn the budget for outsourcing of translations was partially increased. The full budgetary impact of these operations is visible in 2016 when all staff transfers from the CoR to the EPRS have taken place. In accordance with Annex II, this implies, as compared to the situation before the signature of the Cooperation Agreement, a reduction in staff expenditure of some 2.4 million euros (2016 salary levels), an additional 0.8 million euros for outsourcing of translation and an additional 0.4 million euros for political work, both already included in the CoR budget base as of 2015. All in all, the CoR's budget has been reduced by some 1.2 million euros per year as from 2016.

Annex II explicitly states that "an eventual surplus [on externalisation of translations] can be used for further political work in a budgetary neutral manner". Parts of these appropriations were reallocated

to other areas in 2015 and 2016 by means of external transfers of appropriations, i.e. involving the Budget Authority.

5. Conclusions

In 2016, the cooperation based on the agreement continued to build on the achievements from the previous years and was assessed positively in the meeting between the CoR President and the Chair of the Conference of Committee Chairs on 8 November 2016.

The political cooperation should be further developed at the level of CoR/CCC Presidents, CoR commissions and EP committees, and between EP and CoR rapporteurs, respecting the autonomy and the specific approaches used by each Committee/Commission. In this context, the CoR would welcome a more systematic approach to the cooperation. The cooperation at members' level is successfully supported by the respective secretariats. Further ways of cooperation are currently being envisaged, covering the entire legislative cycle and including fact-finding activities and cooperation in communication and information.

The cooperation on the administrative aspects of the agreement has equally advanced and the agreement will continue to be the basis for reinforcing synergies between the CoR and EP secretariat.

ANNEXES

- Cooperation Agreement between the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions
- Annex I: Annex on Administrative Cooperation
- Annex II: Budgetary scenario staff transfer from the Committee to the European Parliament
- Annex III: Progress made in 2016 on the files for enhanced cooperation (as of December 2016)

Annex III

Progress made in 2016 on the files for enhanced cooperation (as of December 2016)

A more structured co-operation on joint thematic planning on key dossiers of common interest clearly requires commitment from both sides as well as a strong and active support of the political level and the administration of both institutions. A good example is COTER with REGI and their combined work to prepare the latest REGI-COTER meeting on 12 October 2016 and on the same format COTER and TRAN and their cooperation in order to prepare the first TRAN-COTER meeting held on 29 September 2016.

Specifically, the 4 CoR Commissions (COTER, ECON, SEDEC, ENVE) concerned with the items identified in the letter from the Chair of the EP Conference of Committee Chairs of 15 February 2016 have contacted their counterparts at DG IPOL. Following is an overview on the specific dossiers, prepared by the CoR commissions (subject to further updates):

▪ The Energy Union

- Subject to more detailed discussion at the political and administrative level, the specific common objective of the EP ITRE and the CoR ENVE, based on their respective previous political positions could be: to insist on improved EU framework conditions for renewable energy investment, including local and regional scale projects, in order to facilitate the achievement of the EU's 2030 targets, and to formulate policy recommendations in this regard vis-à-vis the European Commission and the Council.
- If the EC legislative proposals on renewable energy and the electricity market are adopted on 30 November (as foreseen), the CoR ENVE Commission could invite the EP ITRE rapporteur to take the floor during the debate on this dossier in the ENVE meeting on 24 April 2017 (date for adoption by the CoR Plenary tbc, tentatively: July or October 2017) . Moreover, it could be explored whether during the same period there could be a hearing in the EP ITRE (or another format of discussion/ debate) where the CoR rapporteur could be scheduled as a speaker.
- Concerning studies and the supporting material, the CoR ENVE Secretariat could share with our colleagues in the EP ITRE Secretariat the two study reports delivered by our framework contractor recently on the following subjects: 1) sustainable heating and cooling, and 2) the energy market, both from the point of view of local and regional authorities, important aspects of which need to be considered within the framework of the EU.

▪ The Digital union

- Cooperation on different legislative initiatives of the Digital Single Market: Free flow of Data, Telecommunications package, ICT standards, Cyber security, e-skills (from New Skills Agenda).
- From the on-going opinions, meetings with rapporteurs on Revision of the AVMSD AVMSD, European Cloud Initiative planned in September.

- e-Government Action Plan: A multi-stakeholder event was organised 20 September jointly with DG CNECT, EP ITRE secretariat could be invited, as there is no rapporteur for the moment at EP.
- **Horizon 2020 – mid-term review**
 - Possible own-initiative opinion from the CoR, which could work closely with the EP one.
 - Possible CoR own-initiative on Bioeconomy could be linked to the H2020 mid-term review.
 - Science meets Regions High-level interinstitutional conference: The 2016 edition, which included the STOA department of the EPRS, aimed to extend this partnership to a number of EU regions and the CoR in particular.
 - On the 7th of November (1st day) a half-day high-level conference "Science meets Regions" was held at the CoR premises. On the 8th of November (2d day of the interinstitutional event), CoR members and their experts were invited to the EP to take part in the "Science meets Parliament". The CoR President was involved in both events.
- **Smart Specialisation Strategy**
 - The EP issued an opinion and the CoR may issue one on the future of S3, very focused on regional innovation strategies and creation of future bottom-up value-chains. It may also be linked to a related pilot project/preparatory action, pending of approval at 2017 budget.
- **The revision of the Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF), next MFF (MFF post-2020 was not mentioned in the letter of Mr Buzek)**
 - The COTER secretariat succeeded in arranging bilateral meetings between the EP BUDG rapporteurs (Mr Jan Olbrycht, Ms Isabelle Thomas) and the CoR rapporteur Mr Luc Van den Brande on this dossier.
 - Both EP rapporteurs participated in the 3rd meeting of the BUDG Working Group on 6 April, developing a fruitful discussion with CoR members.
 - The CoR opinion on the "Mid-term revision of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)" was prepared in close coordination and cooperation with both EP rapporteurs. The EP report contains several recommendations that are in line with the CoR opinion on the matter, excellent impact was therefore achieved on this dossier.
 - On 14 September 2016, the European Commission presented its proposal for a mid-term revision of the MFF, accompanied by a number of legislative proposals (proposal for an amendment of the MFF Regulation, a continuation of EFSI, a proposal for simplifying financial rules etc.). The COTER secretariat analyses these legislative packages and is exploring its future steps on the matter, also as regards closer cooperation with respective committees in the European Parliament.
 - In accordance with the MFF Regulation, the Commission has to present, by 1 January 2018, a proposal for a next MFF post-2020. It is envisaged that the CoR, will issue an opinion on this dossier (to be explored whether to issue an opinion before the EC presents its proposal). The COTER secretariat will investigate whether an enhanced cooperation with the EP BUDG committee can be established.

- **A consideration of the reform of the system of EU own resources**
 - On the basis of a final report of the HLG on own resources, the Commission may present a legislative proposal on the reform of the system of EU own resources. A separate opinion on the matter is envisaged (depending on the content of the final report). Since several horizontal working groups in the European Parliament are discussing the reform of EU own resources, it is expected that the EP BUDG will appoint a rapporteur on this dossier, too.

- **Budgetary measures in relation to the refugee crisis**
 - The CoR Resolution on the "Draft Annual EU Budget for 2017" has been circulated among the chair and vice-chairs of the EP BUDG committee. In addition, Sir Albert Bore, Chair of the BUDG Working Group, has recently had **bilateral meetings with EP BUDG rapporteur** (Mr Jens Geier) and **shadow rapporteur** (Mr Siegfried Muresan). They agreed to cooperate even closer.
 - Mr Muresan as the future rapporteur on EU Budget for 2018 will be invited to all BUDG WG meetings.

- **Monitoring the EIB's implementation of EFSI. Especially as regards the balance between the additionality requirement and prudent financing**
 - The EP has expressed willingness to work with the CoR in relation to EFSI monitoring. This was clearly stated by EP-ECON Chair Roberto Gualtieri at the CoR-ECON meeting on 10 December 2015 and during a bilateral meeting with Dr Buchman, the CoR ECON chair, on 9/12.
 - Following from this, President Markkula was invited to and delivered the closing keynote speech at the 28 June 2016 conference of the EP intergroup for long term investment which focused on the Juncker Plan and the EFSI; CoR EEP President Michael Schneider had previously taken part in a conference on 23 May on the EFSI one year on, organised by MEP Andrey Novakov (EPP/BG).
 - Several MEPs took part in the CoR's Bratislava Summit on 8/9 July at which overcoming the investment gap and the EFSI were central themes.
 - The two EP co-rapporteurs, Bullmann (ECON) and Fernandez (BUDG) have not embarked forcefully on the monitoring of EFSI implementation. They are still (since 14 months now) awaiting an 'exchange of information agreement' with the EC and the EIB on the implementation of the EFSI. They call for a more in-depth assessment especially of the additionality aspect of the EFSI. Bullmann/ Fernandez are likely to be appointed EP co-rapporteurs for the new EFSI 2.0 regulation issued on 14/9.
 - Several EP Committees were invited to provide opinions on the EFSI implementation, including REGI. The CoR ECON Secretariat provided in July 2016 suggestions for the draft REGI report, most of which were taken up by rapporteur Mercedes Bresso. While in the draft report itself, Mrs Bresso did not take on the suggestion of the CoR to take part in the EFSI monitoring, at the REGI meeting on 8/9, she proposed to have a hearing "with the CoR" on how to involve the LRAs in the implementation of the EFSI.

- President Markkula's opinion on investment and the EFSI will be discussed at the CoR-ECON meeting on 28 September: invitations to ECON chair Gualtieri (alternatively Fernandez or Bresso) are awaiting a final confirmation.
 - The CoR ECON Secretariat has requested and obtained a study report from the EPRS on the topic of investment conducive to long-term growth, with references to the EFSI. It has shared its own draft survey report on obstacles to investments and the EFSI (to be released at the ECON on 28.9.) on an informal basis with the EP ECON Secretariat (which had expressed a great interest in the survey and in obtaining evidence from the regional level).
 - Investing in jobs and growth - Maximising the contribution of ESIF. The CoR had prepared an own-initiative opinion (outcome of the negotiations on the Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes COTER-VI/001 rapporteur Mr Zagar (SI/EPP)) in anticipation of the EC report on "Investing in jobs and growth – Maximising the contribution of ESIF" (Art. 16 report). The rapporteur presented this opinion to the EP REGI committee on 15/10/2015. Moreover, specific messages of the opinion, notably on the importance of effectively applying the partnership principle, were taken up by EP rapporteurs in their draft report (REGI) and opinion (EMPL) on New territorial development tools in Cohesion policy 2014-2020: Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) and Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) following bilateral meetings between the CoR rapporteur and the European Parliament's rapporteurs.
 - At the moment the CoR is discussing this topic in the framework of its opinions on The future of Cohesion policy beyond 2020 (COTER-VI/015 rapporteur Mr Schneider DE/EPP) and the opinion on Simplification of ESIF from the perspective of LRAs (COTER-VI/012 rapporteur Mr Osvald CZ/PES). It is envisaged that the rapporteurs could present these opinions to REGI once adopted.
 - Moreover, the upcoming REGI-COTER meeting will also focus on first findings of the implementation of the 2014-2020 ESIF programmes, in particular in view of their performance and result oriented approach as well as the key challenges for the current and future cohesion policy.
 - As mentioned above, the EP ECON Secretariat has repeatedly expressed interest in jointly monitoring the EFSI with the CoR (especially to get the regional, from the ground, perspective); it has, however, also indicated that at Secretariat level it was impossible to commit way in advance to concrete events, meetings and their timing. A series of joint meetings and exchanges have been explored in recent weeks/months with the EP.
- **The Structural Reforms Support Programme**
 - After several months of standoff in the EP, the dossier was attributed to REGI in the lead, and not ECON.
 - The CoR opinion on the SRSP of Olga Zrihen (PS 7 April 2016) was shared with the EP co-rapporteurs Krehl (S&D/DE) and van Nistelrooij (EPP/NL), together with proposed amendments to their report. The CoR opinion is reflected in the EP draft report (submitted to the REGI meeting on 8.9.), notably with regard to the request of involving/covering local and regional authorities in the SRSP.

- CoR rapporteur Olga Zrihen took part in the EP REGI meeting on 8 September to present her opinion.
 - A considerable result was already achieved with the taking over of points from the CoR opinion in the EP report and the participation of the CoR rapporteur, Olga Zrihen, in the REGI meeting on 8/9.
 - The CoR ECON Secretariat will continue to follow developments in the Parliament on this legislative initiative, and continue to cooperate with rapporteur Zrihen and her political group Secretariat to ensure the CoR's key points are included in the final SRSP regulatory text. To this end, especially bilateral meetings are sought between Olga Zrihen and the EP co-rapporteurs Krehl and van Nistelrooij. Further appearances of Mrs Zrihen at the REGI on the SRSP at this stage are not envisaged.
- **A review of the Partnership agreements and operational programs.**
- The CoR prepared an own-initiative opinion on the outcome of the negotiations on the Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes (COTER-VI/001 rapporteur Mr Zagar (SI/EPP)). The rapporteur presented this opinion to the EP REGI committee on 15 October 2015 and met with REGI and EMPL rapporteurs concerning the EP report on New territorial development tools in Cohesion policy 2014-202: Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) and Community-Led Local Development (CLLD).