

REGI News

Newsletter of the Committee on Regional Development



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URBAN AGENDA: now a big issue in Cohesion Policy. See also: [Riga declaration](#) and Pact of Amsterdam

A word from the Chair



Dear Colleagues,

Dear Friends,

2015 is nearing an end. With the last meeting of the REGI Committee on 30 November - 01 December, we are closing a year full of varied activities. You can find more information on the work carried out by our Members in 2015 in this issue.

We started our first meeting of the year with an exchange of views with Commissioner Corina Crețu. For our last meeting, we will have the pleasure of meeting Mrs Crețu once again. It will certainly be a good opportunity to summarise our cooperation and put in place some objectives for the year ahead.

I would like to use this last Newsletter of 2015 to wish you a peaceful and happy end to the year.

Iskra Mihaylova



Issue 2

8th Parliamentary term

25 November 2015

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In Focus

Looking back and preparing for the future

2015 is coming to an end and merits a short summary of what we have achieved during this year. All in all, we held 11 REGI meetings addressing a large spectrum of issues.

We started the year with a first exchange of views with Commissioner Corina Cretu. REGI Members met the Commissioner on several other occasions, including an extraordinary meeting at the beginning of September. In March, the Committee also hosted the Vice-President of the European Commission, Mr Katainen, who addressed the issue of relations between the European Fund for Strategic Investments and Cohesion Policy.



2015 was a year of enhanced cooperation with the Committee of the Regions. The Open Days joint meeting between REGI and COTER was the pinnacle of this cooperation. It has become a more regular occurrence that representatives of the Committee of the Regions are invited to the REGI meetings, which helps to draw different perspectives on cohesion policy.

As usual, cooperation with the presidencies is also an important element of the parliamentary committee. Twice yearly it gives members an opportunity to engage in a deeper exchange on the priorities of the current and upcoming presidencies. In January, the Latvian Presidency attended the meeting and presented its priorities. Later, in July, it was the turn of the Luxembourg Presidency. This cooperation is an ongoing activity, and contact has already been established with the upcoming Dutch Presidency. These meetings and dialogues allow Members to express their interest in specific files or topics, and to try to put them on the agenda of the rotating Presidency.

2015 was also an exceptional year due to one particularly hot topic. Between July and October, Members discussed and prepared a report, presented by the Chair, on the amendment of the Common Provision Regulation (CPR) to provide exceptional measures for Greece. This was a consequence of the decisions made by European Council in July. This file demonstrated the capacity of the REGI (and associated committees) to handle an urgent legislative file in an efficient and cooperative way.

Scrutiny is not only a matter of hearings and informal dialogue; The REGI Committee organized 2 delegations: the first to the Netherlands and the second to Sicily, both of which helped Members to understand how cohesion policy is implemented on the ground. A number of discussions with local authorities and beneficiaries helped MEPs to better understand the implications of their legislative work for citizens.

We would also like to highlight the foundation of the Implementation Working Group. Meetings are held between Coordinators and representatives of the European Commission in an informal setting. This type of cooperation helps to gain a deeper insight into the topics that interest the Members.

To summarise: 11 REGI meetings, 2 legislative reports, 6 own initiative reports, 4 delegated acts, 18 opinions, 4 oral questions, 1 motion for resolution, 13 exchanges of views with external partners or experts, 3 delegations, 2 public hearings, 6 presentations of studies, 2 workshops, 2 joint meetings with COTER (CoR), 1 working group (implementation of cohesion policy).

This year was fruitful and has lined up an interesting agenda for 2016.

Preparing for the 2016 Slovak Presidency

On 18 November the Chair, Ms Mihaylova, met Ľubomír Vážny, Deputy Prime Minister for Investments of the Slovak Republic to discuss cohesion policy priorities during the forthcoming Slovakian presidency of the EU. Mr Vazny outlined that Slovakia will be seeking a balanced approach between the different positions of Member States in the field of cohesion policy, especially in the context of the MFF mid-term review. The Presidency will give top priority to the effective implementation of the reformed cohesion policy and in this context Mr Vazny expressed his strong wish to work in very close cooperation with the REGI committee.

Ms Mihaylova welcomed the constructive approach with enthusiasm and confirmed REGI's firm commitment to scrutinizing the gradual implementation of the policy on the ground. She also reiterated that the Mid-term review of the MFF will be among REGI's main priorities for 2016, but also stated that simplification and financial instruments in cohesion policy will be high on the agenda. Finally, the Chair invited the Slovak Presidency to come and discuss their priorities with REGI members in July 2016.

In the afternoon, the Chair met a delegation from the Slovak Parliament's committee on economic affairs. The discussions focused, again, on the priorities of the forthcoming Presidency of the EU and possible interparliamentary cooperation in this context. Members of the Slovak Parliament also mentioned the issue of the backlog in payments which not only puts a serious strain on the national budgets, but also acts as a deterrent for local and regional authorities as regards the future use of the ESIF.

* * *

Last time - REGI meeting – 12 November 2015

Exchange of views with Mr Phil Wynn Owen, Chamber II, European Court of Auditors, on special report no. 10/2015 (errors in public procurement in cohesion policy)



Phil Wynn Owen

[Special Report No 10/2015](#) was presented by Mr. Wynn Owen, the ECA reporting Member for that report. Mr. Wynn Owen noted that compliance with public procurement rules is a perennial source of error in cohesion policy, which in turn, affects value for money in public procurement procedures. Both the Member States and the Commission have to do more, and Mr. Wynn Owen insisted that it is necessary to carefully monitor compliance with the ex-ante conditionality relating to public procurement, calling on the Commission to take all the available measures in cases where Member States are found not to have fulfilled that conditionality by the relevant deadline. Moreover, the speaker considered that IT tools could help in addressing some of the problems detected, but their use across Member States varies greatly. Emphasis is put on the need for the Commission to ensure an appropriate leadership at the highest possible political level and to set up an internal action plan with annual reporting on progress. The Commission accepts all the recommendations of the ECA and shares the overall objective of ensuring effective implementation through the selection of quality projects with the best value for money. These measures will be discussed at the higher political level during the meeting of Commissioners Crețu and Bieńkowska, scheduled for 1 December 2015.

Exchange of views with the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)



Frédéric Vallier

REGI Committee hosted invited Mr Frédéric Vallier, the Secretary General of the [Council of European Municipalities and Regions](#) (CEMR). Mr Vallier recounted the background of the CEMR since its foundation in 1951. It is a European-level umbrella organization with 60 member associations (from 41 countries) which claim to speak for 150 000 local government bodies. Mr Frédéric Vallier presented the main topics of interest for CEMR and outlined differences and complementarities between CEMR and Committee of the Regions. The hottest topic for members of the Council is the migrants' crisis, which directly impacts local authorities. There are more medium and long term topics related to the urban agenda and the Riga Declaration. The Secretary General also addressed the issue of the mid-term review, pointing out the most important aspects in his view: partnership principle, place based approach, Community Level Local Development (CLLD) and Integrated Territorial Instrument (ITI)

The CEMR is working on the UN's new urban agenda for 2016. The main event relating to this is planned for Nicosia in April.

In the discussion with Members it became clear that a closer cooperation with the CEMR might help the REGI Committee to address some specific issues. There was evidence of great synergy between Members and the CEMR.

*** VOTED IN THE LAST MEETING ***

During the last Committee meeting, the following texts were adopted (for more information please follow the hyperlink):

TITLE	RAPPORTEUR
European Investment Bank (EIB) - Annual Report 2014 2015/2127(INI)	Mr Ivan JAKOVČIĆ (ALDE)
Annual Report 2014 on the Protection of the EU's Financial Interests - Fight against fraud 2015/2128(INI)	Mr Derek VAUGHAN (S&D)
Recommendations to the European Commission on the negotiations for the Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA) 2015/2233(INI)	Ms Monika VANA (Greens/EFA)

Ahead of us - REGI meeting – 30 November – 1 December 2015

(*) agenda of the forthcoming meeting might be changed after publication of the Newsletter

Exchange of views with Corina Crețu, Commissioner for Regional Policy



Ms Corina Crețu

Commissioner Crețu has attended the Committee on a number of occasions in 2015, most recently in September (twice). The exchange of views she will hold with the Committee on 1 December will be an opportunity for her to reflect on the work of her directorate-general during the first year of her period in office. She is expected to note, among other things, the conclusion of the last of the operational programmes, through which Member States will implement cohesion policy in the years to come; the twenty-fifth anniversary of the establishment of the INTERREG programme; the steps the institutions have taken to try to reduce the backlog in payments under cohesion policy; and the amendment to the Common Provisions Regulation adopted in October, to make specific measures available to help Greece overcome its current economic difficulties.

New territorial development tools in Cohesion policy 2014-2020: Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) and Community-Led Local Development (CLLD): draft report

[2015/2224\(INI\)](#)

Opinion: EMPL



Rapporteur:

Ms Ruža TOMAŠIĆ (ECR)

Two new instruments have been introduced in the 2014-2020 programming period in order to achieve the territorial cohesion objective: Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) and Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI).

The importance of an integrated territorial approach, the interaction and trust between the national and local levels, the capacity of local actors, and the complexity and administrative burden associated with the implementation of ITI and CLLD.

The vote is planned for February 2016.

Workshop on financial instruments in cohesion policy



The legislation for Cohesion Policy 2014-2020 foresees a considerable increase of the use of Financial Instruments in order to enhance the effectiveness and the impact of Structural funds. If well implemented, Financial Instruments are a resource-efficient way of spending money to meet the Europe 2020 objectives. They provide support for investments by way of loans, guarantees, equity and other mechanisms, and can be combined with technical support, interest rate subsidies or guarantee fee subsidies within the same operation. They also help to mobilise additional public or private co-investments in order to address market failures in line with Europe 2020 and cohesion policy priorities.

Four experts will provide an insight into the opportunities and challenges of the use of Financial Instruments, including experiences from Member States and investments in urban development. [FULL PROGRAMME](#)

Discharge 2014: EU general budget - European Commission[2015/2154\(DEC\)](#)

Lead: CONT



Rapporteur for the opinion:
Ms Ivana MALETIĆ (EPP)

The draft opinion by Ms Maletić (EPP) makes reference to elements such as increasing error rates, weak financial control systems and overly complicated administrative procedures, which it suggests might affect the successful implementation of Cohesion Policy in Member States.

A common theme throughout the rapporteur's recommendations is a call for simplification of procedures and more detailed reporting from the Commission, in order to reduce the chance of error and fraudulent activity. The consideration of the draft opinion will take place on 30 November, and the deadline for tabling amendments has been provisionally set for 16 December. The REGI Committee is due to vote on the 15 February 2016.

Upcoming events in Brussels or near to your home

Date		Place	Additional info
27/11/2015	'Polish and EU Regional Policy: Effective Management of Funds and Challenges for the Future' - debate	Lublin, Poland	
30/11 – 01/12 2015	REGI Committee meeting	EP, Brussels	
30/11 – 11/12 2015	COP21 Conference	Paris	
12/12/2015	Seminar on anti-corruption and anti-fraud in relation to the use of European Structural and Investment Funds	Budapest	
11 and 14/01/2016	REGI Committee meeting	EP, Brussels	
25-26/01/2016	Launch Conference of the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region	Brdo, Slovenia	

Useful internet links[REGI Website](#)[EP studies Website](#)[EP Library - Info on items related to regional development](#)[OEIL - The Legislative Observatory](#)[Regional Policy Inforegio](#)[EUR-Lex](#)[Committee of the Regions](#)[Back to the first page](#)