

Information Guide



Committee of the Regions

A guide to information sources on the Committee of the Regions (CoR), with hyperlinks to further sources of information within European Sources Online and on external websites

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Introduction

The political debate during the next two and half years will provide one of the biggest challenges so far for the Committee of the Regions. The sovereign debt crisis and economic downturn within the European Union have heavily impacted regions and cities. We also find ourselves debating the European Union itself; not only the functioning of its institutions but also its governance, added value and budget are at the heart of the political agenda. It is under these difficult circumstances that the transformation of Europe has to take place.

I strongly believe that above all the European Union must demonstrate its capacity to deliver on the ground. In doing so the EU will built confidence and trust across the continent. My top priority therefore is the achievement of "Europe 2020" in partnership with regions and cities.

From: Foreword by Ramón Luis Valcárcel Siso, CoR President, to [Political Priorities 2012-2015](#).

Overview

The Committee of the Regions (CoR) represents the interests of regional and local authorities in the European Union. It is one of two key consultative bodies in the EU's policy-making process (the other being the [European Economic and Social Committee](#)). The [CoR](#) was created by the 1993 [Treaty on European Union](#). Since then, it has extended its right to be consulted and has achieved administrative and budgetary independence.

History

The advent of the CoR was closely linked to the Union's commitment to subsidiarity, as expressed in the Preamble to the [Treaty on European Union](#), which said that Member States were:

Resolved to continue the process of creating an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe, in which decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizen in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity.

The CoR held its first plenary session in March 1994; its fifth term of office runs from 2010 until 2014.

Its structure and activities were originally governed by Articles 263-265 of the [Treaty establishing the European Community](#) (TEC). With the advent of the Treaty of Lisbon, provisions on the CoR are now set out in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (see 'Legal basis' below).

Although the TEC stated that the CoR should comprise 'representatives of local and regional bodies', it did not specify the level of government to be represented, and there is thus a wide range represented in the CoR, from regions to counties, districts and cities (for details of selection processes for CoR members, see [Procedures in the Member States](#)). From 2006, the Treaty of Nice required members of the CoR to be elected members of regional assemblies or local authorities, or to be politically answerable to an elected assembly (see [Summaries of EU legislation](#)).

The issues on which consultation of the CoR by the Council or the Commission was mandatory were initially limited to the following (Articles are as re-numbered by the Treaty of Amsterdam):

- culture (Article 151)
- economic and social cohesion (Articles 159-162)
- education, vocational training and youth (Article 149)
- public health (Article 152)
- trans-European transport, telecommunications and energy networks (Article 156)

However, the Treaty of Amsterdam extended the CoR's interests by adding other issues:

- cross-border co-operation (Article 265)
- employment guidelines and incentives (Articles 128 and 129)
- environment (Article 175)
- equal opportunities - implementation of the principle (Article 141)
- public health (Article 152)
- Social Fund (Article 148)
- social legislation resulting from the agreements reached by management and labour (Articles 136 - 143)
- transport (Articles 71 and 80)
- vocational training (Article 150)

The Treaty of Amsterdam (see [Summaries of EU legislation](#)) also gave the European Parliament the right to consult the CoR; established a separate administrative structure for the CoR (previously shared with the Economic and Social Committee); and allowed the CoR to draw up its own [Rules of Procedure](#) (version of 09/01/2010; previously the CoR rules had to be unanimously approved by the Council). The Treaty of Lisbon further extended the scope of the CoR's involvement to include civil protection, climate change, energy, and services of general interest.

Welcoming the new Treaty, a CoR [Press Release](#) stated:

For the first time in its history, the European Union - under the Treaty of Lisbon - explicitly recognises 'territorial cohesion' as a fundamental objective in addition to economic and social cohesion.

The explicit recognition in the Treaty that the EU is to promote territorial cohesion was said by the CoR to be a huge step towards the Committee's efforts to mainstream the concept in EU policies.

Legal basis

There is only one mention of the CoR in the current Treaty on European Union ([TEU](#)), with Article 13(4) stating:

The European Parliament, the Council and the Commission shall be assisted by an Economic and Social Committee and a Committee of the Regions acting in an advisory capacity.

Following the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, detailed provisions on the Union's advisory bodies are set out in Articles 300-307 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union ([TFEU](#)).

Echoing the words of the TEU, Article 300(1) states:

The European Parliament, the Council and the Commission shall be assisted by an Economic and Social Committee and a Committee of the Regions, exercising advisory functions.

Under Article 300(3), the CoR:

shall consist of representatives of regional and local bodies who either hold a regional or local authority electoral mandate or are politically accountable to an elected assembly.

Article 300(4) provides that Members of the Committee:

shall not be bound by any mandatory instructions. They shall be completely independent in the performance of their duties, in the Union's general interest.

Article 305 limits the number of CoR members to 350, with an equal number of alternate members also appointed. Members serve a renewable five year term. They are appointed on the basis of proposals made by Member States. No member of the Committee can simultaneously be a Member of the European Parliament. When the national mandate on which their appointment to the CoR depends comes to an end, the term of office of members of the Committee automatically ends.

The Committee's President and officers are elected from among its members for a term of two and a half years (Article 306).

Article 307 sets out provisions concerning CoR Opinions. The CoR is to be consulted:

by the European Parliament, by the Council or by the Commission where the Treaties so provide and in all other cases, in particular those which concern cross-border cooperation, in which one of these institutions considers it appropriate.

The same Article also provides, in appropriate cases, for the Committee to submit Opinions on its own initiative.

Amongst the [Protocols](#) attached to the Treaty of Lisbon, one on transitional provisions (see Article 7) set out the allocation of members of the CoR until such time as the Council decides it, by the Decision referred to in Article 301 of the TFEU. The 344 places are allocated as shown below in 'Structure and composition'.

Brief details of other changes brought about by the Treaty of Lisbon are given in CoR Press Releases. They include the right of the CoR to bring legal actions before the European Court of Justice either to protect its own institutional prerogatives or to request the annulment of new EU legislation that it considers to breach the principle of subsidiarity (see Press Release [COR/09/113](#)).

To that end, the 3-4 December 2009 plenary session decided that CoR members should be able to refer EU laws which infringe the subsidiarity principle to the Court of Justice on the basis of a simple majority decision (see Rule 53 of the [Rules of Procedure](#)).

The Treaty also identifies regional parliaments with legislative powers as new actors in the EU decision-making process, involving them in a 'subsidiarity monitoring procedure', with a [Protocol on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality](#) specifying in Article 6 that:

Any national Parliament or any chamber of a national Parliament may, within eight weeks from the date of transmission of a draft legislative act, send to the Presidents of the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission a reasoned opinion stating why it considers that the draft in question does not comply with the principle of subsidiarity. It will be for each national Parliament or

each chamber of a national Parliament to consult, where appropriate, regional parliaments with legislative powers.

A [Protocol](#) attached to the Treaty of Lisbon on transitional provisions sets out the allocation of members of the CoR (see Article 8). The 344 places are allocated as shown below in 'Structure and composition'.

The booklet [A new treaty: a new role for regions and local authorities](#) highlights the impact of the Treaty of Lisbon on the CoR.

Role

Although the CoR is not a decision-making body, its members are drawn from regional and local government and its views are therefore considered representative not only of local and regional authorities' interests, but also of the people they serve - the citizens of the Union. The principle of subsidiarity is one of the main principles of the Committee's work - that the EU should not take on tasks which are better suited to national, regional or local administrations.

According to the CoR's [Mission Statement](#):

The Committee of the Regions is the EU's assembly of regional and local representatives.

We are a political assembly of holders of a regional or local electoral mandate serving the cause of European integration. Through our political legitimacy, we provide institutional representation for all the European Union's territorial areas, regions, cities and municipalities.

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

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. To this end, we work closely together with the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, and in the Member States with the various tiers of authority, in order also to promote multi-level governance.

Opinions are adopted at plenary sessions, by simple majority. The [Opinions and resolutions](#) page gives access to impact assessments of CoR Opinions and the CoR Impact Report 2010. The [TOAD database](#) contains working documents, including draft Opinions, agendas, minutes of meetings and COM documents.

On 20 September 2001, in response to the CoR's demands for a greater political role within the EU's institutional framework, the Presidents of the Commission and the Committee of the Regions signed a 'Protocol governing arrangements for co-operation between the European Commission and the Committee of the Regions'. A new Protocol was signed in 2007, with an addendum on information policy later adopted (the texts of both Protocol and addendum are in [this document](#)).

The Protocol committed the Commission and the Committee to work towards accomplishing the following tasks:

- strengthening the Committee's consultative role by better work planning and more effective and more political follow-up
- facilitating the structured dialogue with local authorities and their associations
- ensuring better implementation of the subsidiarity principle
- supporting the Union's external action by organising and developing dialogue with local authorities in third countries
- building on communication synergies in order to bring Europe closer to the people

On 16 February 2012, a new 'Protocol on cooperation between the European Commission and the Committee of the Regions' was adopted (published on 5 April 2012 as [2012/C 102/02](#)). Amongst other things, it commits the CoR to outlining each year the Committee's key positions regarding the Commission's work programme for the forthcoming year, and requires the Commission and the CoR to exchange relevant documentation and information 'as speedily as possible'. The two parties agree:

to intensify their collaboration in order to increase the synergies between their respective activities, in particular in the context of the 'EU 2020' strategy, the economic, social and territorial cohesion, and especially in the implementation of cross-border, interregional and transnational cooperation.

With regard to information and communication, the CoR and the Commission acknowledge the role played by regional and local authorities in providing the public with information on EU policies, and agree to target their common communication efforts on the following areas:

- cooperation between the EU representation offices in the Member States and Committee members to support their mutual communication activities at national, regional and local level,
- stepping up cooperation and support in order to develop activities targeting local and regional media as well as improved synergies with national associations of regional and local elected representatives,
- cooperation in the area of public opinion via exchange of information and feedback on Eurobarometer surveys of interest to the Committee and/or via Eurobarometer surveys with a local and/or regional dimension whenever possible,
- cooperation on the development of tools such as websites and newsletters in the context of the Interinstitutional Editorial Committee for the Internet to develop channels for information and communication with the general public.

On 14-15 December 2011, the CoR adopted a Resolution on 'The priorities of the Committee of the Regions for 2012 based on the legislative and work programme of the European Commission' (published as [2012/C 54/01](#)). Amongst other things, the Resolution identified the future of the EU as a major issue, stating that the CoR:

1. firmly believes that the key challenge for the EU is now to re-establish public trust in its capacity to secure financial stability and renewed economic growth, as well as giving priority to democratically legitimate political decision-making relating to the negative influence of the financial market; [and]
2. advocates greater European integration as regards economic governance, provided that this development is given democratically legitimacy and occurs in the framework of the European Union institutions.

In July 2012, the CoR adopted a [Resolution](#) on 'Priorities of the Committee of the Regions for 2013 in view of the Work Programme of the European Commission', setting out the Committee's key positions on the issues concerned.

For itself, the CoR identifies five main priorities for the current period (see [Political Priorities 2012-2015](#) and [Priorities](#) page):

- Delivering on Europe 2020
- Ensuring the 'better investment' role of local and regional authorities (LRAs)
- Engaging with citizens and debating Europe
- Developing the territorial dimension of EU external relations
- A strong CoR in a new Europe

Examples of the CoR's influence on the EU legislative process are given in [Making a difference - How regions and cities shape Europe's legislation. Key successes 2011-2012](#).

Structure and composition

There are 353 [members](#) of the CoR, plus an equal number of alternate members. Members are nominated by Member State governments and appointed by the Council of the European Union for a five-year, renewable term (the five year term was introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon; it was previously four years). A member's term of office ends automatically, even in the absence of notification, at the end, or upon loss of, the member's electoral mandate on the basis of which he was proposed for membership.

The current term runs from 2010-2014. Members of the Committee are independent and are expected to act in the Union's general interest (as required by Article 300(4) TFEU and the CoR [Rules of Procedure](#)).

Member State	Number of CoR members
France, Germany, Italy, UK	24
Poland, Spain	21
Romania	15
Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden	12
Croatia, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Lithuania, Slovakia	9
Estonia, Latvia, Slovenia	7
Cyprus, Luxembourg	6
Malta	5
Total	353

Details of members and staff of the CoR can be found via the [EU Whoiswho directory](#).

The Treaty of Nice proposed two changes to the way in which CoR members are chosen. It stipulated that they must be members of an elected local or regional body or accountable to an elected assembly and also that they would be appointed by a qualified majority of the Council rather than by unanimous decision.

Each member sits on one or two subject-based [Commissions](#), responsible for drafting Opinions and Resolutions which are presented for adoption at plenary sessions. (Members representing smaller Member States may be able to participate in more than two Commissions). There are six main Commissions:

- [Commission for Territorial Cohesion Policy](#) (COTER)
- [Commission for Economic and Social Policy](#) (ECOS)
- [Commission for the Environment, Climate Change and Energy](#) (ENVE)

- [Commission for Education, Youth, Culture and Research](#) (EDUC)
- [Commission for Citizenship, Governance, Institutional Affairs and External Relations](#) (CIVEX)
- [Commission for Natural Resources](#) (NAT)

There is also a [Committee for Financial and Administrative Affairs](#) (CFAA) which was set up to encourage a closer relationship with the budgetary authority.

Members sit as [national delegations](#), although there are five [political groups](#) represented in the CoR:

- [Party of European Socialists](#) (PES)
- [European People's Party](#) (EPP)
- [Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe](#) (ALDE)
- [European Alliance](#) (EA)
- [European Conservatives and Reformists Group](#) (ECR)

The CoR's work is directed by a [President](#), who also represents it in dealings with other bodies and is elected for a two-and-a-half year term (extended from two years by the Treaty of Lisbon). The CoR's work is organised by a [Bureau](#) which comprises 54 members, plus the President, Vice-President and leaders of the political groups. One member per country is designated Vice-President.

On 18 July 2012, Ramón Luis Valcárcel Siso was elected President of the CoR, succeeding Mercedes Bresso (who was elected as CoR First Vice-President). In his acceptance speech, Mr Valcárcel Siso - who is also President of Murcia, Spain - said that his main priority would be to help local and regional authorities tackle the economic crisis, promote growth and create jobs (see [Press Release](#)).

Mr Valcárcel Siso's two-and-a-half-year term started on 13 August 2012 (see [Press Release](#)).

European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation

The European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) was established in 2006 by [Regulation 1082/2006/EC](#) a legal instrument enabling regional and local authorities from different Member States to set up cooperation groupings with a legal personality. An EGTC may organise and manage cross-border, transnational or interregional cooperation measures, with or without a financial contribution from the EU. With a specific consultative remit in the area of cross-border cooperation (Article 307 TFEU, ex Article 265 ECT) the CoR is one of the main supporters of EGTCs, and in 2008 adopted the Opinion 'European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation: new impetus for territorial cooperation in Europe' ([COTER-IV-014](#); see also [EGTC page](#), [Ten questions & answers](#) and [Summaries of EU legislation](#)).

Location

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See also CoR [contact](#) page.

Information sources in the ESO database

Find updated and further information sources in the ESO database:

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Further information sources on the internet

- Committee of the Regions
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 - Summaries of EU legislation
 - [Committee of the Regions](#)
 - [Regional policy](#) (includes factsheets under the headings: [Management of regional policy](#), [Provisions and instruments of regional policy](#), [Review and the future of regional policy](#))
- European Commission: DG Regional Policy
 - [Homepage](#)

- European Commission: DG Communication
 - [RAPID](#) press releases database - [Committee of the Region's Documents](#)
 - EU news: [Institutional affairs](#), [Regions and local development](#)
- European Union: EUR-Lex

The text of proposed and adopted legislation relating to the Committee of the Regions can be found via EUR-Lex:

 - [Proposed](#) - 01 General, financial and institutional matters - [01.40.65 Committee of the Regions](#)
 - [Adopted](#) (01 General, financial and institutional matters - 01.40.65 Committee of the Regions)
 - [Treaty on European Union](#) Article 13(4)
 - [Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union](#) Articles 300, 305-307
- Court of Justice of the European Union: InfoCuria

[Homepage](#): at 'Name of the parties' box enter 'committee of the regions'. Select dates if required. Hit 'Search' at top or bottom of page.
- European Parliament: Legislative Observatory (OEIL)

[Homepage](#): Carry out a [Search](#): scroll down left-hand menu and expand 'Other institutions and bodies', then select 'Committee of the Regions' (if no menu is shown, click 'OK' at the search box to display it).
- European Commission: PreLex

[Homepage](#). In [advanced search](#) either choose 'Fields of activity' and select 'Institutions', or choose 'Activities of the institutions' - 'Opinions of the Committee of the Regions'
- Council of the European Union
 - There is no Council specifically responsible for regional policy, so search for relevant [press releases](#) using terms such as 'structural policy', 'cohesion fund'
- European Parliament
 - [Committee on Regional Development](#) (REGI)
- European Parliament: Fact Sheets
 - Fact Sheet on [Committee of the Regions](#); section on [Sectoral policies](#) has a section on Regional and cohesion policy, with a number of Fact Sheets, including: [Economic, social and territorial cohesion](#) and [The European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation](#)
- European Economic and Social Committee
 - [Economic and Monetary Union, Economic and Social Cohesion](#) (ECO)

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