

THE

ReppORTER

March 2018

Activity report of the EPP-CoR in the European Committee of the Regions



Europe starts
in ...

my
city

my
village

my
region

Launch of the EPP
Grassroots Engagement in
Sofia



European Committee
of the Regions

Foreword

by **President Schneider**

On 9 March, the EPP successfully launched its Grassroots Engagement in view of the 2019 European elections in Sofia, Bulgaria, where we were warmly hosted by the GERB political party, represented by Prime Minister

Boyko Borisov, Tsvetan Tsvetanov, Vice-Chairman of PP GERB, Chairman of the Parliamentary Group, **Yordanka Fandakova**, Mayor of Sofia, and our own **Tanya Hristova**, Mayor of Gabrovo and Head of the Bulgarian Delegation to the CoR. More than 400 GERB mayors, representing 5.5 Mio Bulgarians, were also in attendance, alongside our EPP-CoR members.



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The launch event was followed by the first EPP Local Dialogue with the motto “Europe starts in Sofia”, where approximately 300 young people, students and entrepreneurs were invited to discuss the future of Europe with local and European politicians from the EPP family.

With so many debates on the state of the EU, why do we need more? With the rise of populist and extremist forces, a growing number of citizens have a critical view on the EU. We decided to launch this initiative because we know that the local context is important for people’s identity and for the reality on the ground. It is also the basis for democratic values.

Our objective is first to listen and engage with people and then to make sure that their views are taken on board in the EPP programme for the 2019 elections and in the priorities of the EPP Spitzenkandidat.

The EU needs to make the most out of the know-how of local and regional politicians. They are best placed to connect Europe with its people in the places where they live, work and pursue opportunities.

We believe that the EPP at European, national, regional and local levels should commit to a long-term EPP grassroots engagement to increase confidence in and ownership of our European Union project.

I am extremely grateful to EPP President **Joseph Daul** and to Prime Minister **Boyko Borisov** for their strong political leadership and for embracing our grassroots engagement initiative.

As the EPP family, we have to communicate with courage and determination both what we have achieved and what we are planning to do in the future. We need to work intensively as one, united and responsible political family to remain the driving force for Europe. We count on you to make this initiative a success!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael Schneider". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Michael Schneider
President of the EPP-CoR Group

Members on the field

Europe and Young leaders of local communities



The European Democrat Students held their Winter University 2018 in Krakow, Poland, from 21 to 25 February 2018 dedicated to the theme of "Europe and Young leaders of local communities". As the host of the Malopolska Region and member of the EPP in the EU Committee of the Regions, **Jacek Krupa** welcomed the official student organisation of the EPP saying "Current events, such as the crisis of social trust or increased support for parties expressing extreme views, show us that democracy, just like independence, cannot be taken for granted."

EU and Mediterranean local leaders join forces to protect women and tackle radicalisation"



The annual meeting of the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM) took place in Giza, Egypt, on 21 February with a focus on preventing radicalisation, protecting women and boosting city-to-city partnerships. The UN's eleventh Sustainable Development Goal – to make local communities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable – is reflected in full in the political priorities of the European Committee of the Regions for 2015-2020 and was a key topic during this visit. Given that half of the world's population now live in urban areas, sustainable development cannot be achieved without significantly transforming the way

we build and manage our urban spaces. It was agreed that making cities safe and sustainable means ensuring access to safe and affordable housing whilst also investing in public transport, creating green public spaces, and improving urban planning and management in a way that is both participatory and inclusive. **Nikola Dobroslavić, Michel Lebrun, Olgierd Geblewicz** and **Dimitrios Kalogeropoulos** participated for the EPP-CoR.

Reconnecting the EU and its Citizens: An event at the London School of Economics

"The only way forward is to build a stronger relationship between the EU and its citizens, by respecting the principles of inclusion, representation and transparency." CoR 1st Vice-President, **Markku Markkula**, underlined in a speech at the London School of Economic on 16 February. The event marked the start of the third policy cycle of the 1989 Generation Initiative, which seeks to generate a new institutional vision and for policy proposals that will connect the EU and its citizens. The speech drew on research done under the "Reflecting on Europe: the voice of regional and local authorities to rebuild trust in the European Union" opinion, which was requested by **Donald Tusk**, President of the European Council and which is due to be adopted in the October Plenary Session.

World Health Organisation Summit on Health in Cities



A gathering of 43 mayors and 85 high-level political representatives met in Copenhagen on 13 February to share experiences and ideas for how to place health and well-being at the heart of urban development. **Roberto Pella** contributed to the Summit with a speech entitled Health in Cities: health in a changing global context, which called upon cities to appoint health city managers, who could connect the dots between the

municipality, health and the broader care system. Speaking after the event, Roberto Pella concluded that this was "a fruitful occasion to deepen relations and to underline the importance of cooperation, networks in general and the role of local authorities". A follow-up meeting with Commissioner took place on 12 March.

Task Force Ukraine and the start of new Peer-to-Peer cooperation



The 4th meeting of the European Committee of the Region's Task Force on Ukraine was held in Brussels on 8 March to discuss the latest developments of the decentralization reform in Ukraine. Representatives of three newly amalgamated communities (Hromadas) and two regions as well as Ukraine's deputy minister for regional development, **Vyacheslav Nehoda**, exchanged views with EEP-CoR members **Sören Herbst** and **Arnoldas Abramavicius, Peter M. Wagner**, and other EU representatives. EPP's rapporteur on the Eastern Partnership deliverables: **Sören Herbst** explained how: "decentralization is the most important of all reforms in Ukraine because for the first time in the country's history power is delegated to the local level. It's remarkable what the Ukrainians achieved in only few years and in the face of Russia's ongoing aggression. We can see positive effects on the ground but for an overall success it's crucial that the pace of reforms does not decrease." In the afternoon the match making session of the new Peer-to-Peer cooperation in the frame of the CoR's Task Force with support of the U-LEAD with Europe programme was started. Delegations from five EU regions and cities met their Ukrainian counterparts and discussed the future cooperation in workshops. The partners developed a road map for targeted acquisition of SMEs including qualification of staff and institutionalized support for start-ups. **Marek Woźniak, Arnoldas Abramavicius** and **Sören Herbst** are participating.

EUROPE STARTS IN SOFIA

EPP-CoR meeting: Regions and Cities Investing in Education to Strengthen EU Values

Fostering a stronger sense of European identity based on the cultural and territorial diversity of our continent is an indispensable precondition for a more dynamic European Union. This was the conclusion of a high-level debate, hosted by the Bulgarian members of the EPP-CoR Group and head of the delegation **Tanya Hristova** in Sofia on 9 March. Speaking at the event, European



Commissioner **Mariya Gabriel** highlighted: *"The Future of Europe will be digital and the Europe of the future has to have a human face. Every European citizen should have the right*

to be digitally literate to access suitable jobs in the future labour market. This is crucial for ensuring a better quality of living for all. We need to invest in our citizens and make the digital revolution inclusive as based on the values and principles dear to us."



Other speakers included: **Tsvetan Tsvetanov**, Vice-Chairman of PP GERB, Chairman of the Parliamentary Group of PP GERB, **Lilyana Pavlova**, Minister for the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the EU 2018, who explained that education and training is rightly very high on the European agenda and a key area for the Bulgarian Presidency, **Rosen Plevneliev**, President of Bulgaria 2012 – 2017, who highlighted that when working together for a strong Europe, we should take pride in our culture as well as the positive developments over the history of the education systems. **Yordanka Fandakova**, Mayor of Sofia, touched

on the links between education and culture while **Milen Vrabevski**, Chairman of Bulgarian Memory Foundation, said: "European integration brings peace, but also opportunities. It is important to introduce young people to these opportunities and motivate them to work for the prosperity of their society." EPP-CoR members **Apostolos Tzitzikostas** and **Markku Markkula** also joined the high-level debate, which was summed up by **Emil Boc**, Mayor of Cluj, when he concluded: *"Investing in education is the safest and the most profitable investment in the world. Why? Because there is no risk of bankruptcy."*

Europe Starts in Your Village/City/Region: 1st EPP local dialogue



"With this event in Sofia, the EPP-CoR made a statement that we are taking responsibility to reinforce citizens' voices in developing a strong, modern and democratic Europe!"

Jelena Drenjanin,
EPP-CoR in the CoR

More than 300 young people took part in the first EPP local dialogue, which took place on 9 March 2018 in Sofia. *"In GERB and the EPP, we enable young people who want to engage in politics not only by expressing their opinions but also by participating directly in policy-making - in executive, legisla-*

tive or local authorities" **Yordanka Fandakova**, the Mayor of Sofia said. Sharing her own experience, she explained that by investing in education, more and more young people are choosing to stay in Sofia to start up enterprising and innovative projects. Responding to questions from the

audience, the speakers noted that exchange of good practices concerning modernisation and reforms of the education system must be a priority. *"Teachers today do not know what kind of jobs the children will have, because many of them do not yet exist"* the EPP-CoR's **Jelena Drenjanin** added.





Responding to another question, the speakers agreed that it is important to involve more young people in politics by talking more often about successful examples and showing how they affect people's lives. *"Each one of us can contribute towards making our city or country better. Stop looking for excuses!"* **Andrey Novakov**, MEP said. **Eva Maydell**, MEP, agreed adding a plea to young people to engage in decision-making: *"Many people say 'Europe must do this or that'. The truth is that the EU can do nothing more than the sum of the actions of its citizens. How we will live tomorrow is entirely up to us and we must keep this in mind every time we vote or decide not to."*

EPP local and regional politicians invited to organise their own EPP Local Dialogues

Following the launch of the EPP Grassroots Engagement in Sofia on 9 March and the first EPP local dialogue, the EPP-CoR is calling for expressions of interest to host EPP Local Dialogues in their own regions, cities and municipalities. This grassroots engagement aims to reconnect with citizens, restore

trust in the EU's political representatives and increase ownership of the EU on the ground. Under the motto "Europe starts in your village/city/region", the EPP wants to go into our cities and regions to pass a message of unity in diversity, including: "Europe starts in Sofia" or "Europe starts in

Sibiu" or "Europe starts in Innsbruck". More information on how to organise an EPP local dialogue in your city is available on the EPP-CoR website or contact the secretariat.





“Regional and local politicians represent a great added value for the EPP family. They are best placed to connect the Union with its people in the places where they live, work and pursue opportunities. This Grassroots Engagement will allow an honest dialogue with people on areas that are often decided upon in Brussels or in Strasbourg, but actually implemented in Europe’s cities and regions.”

Michael Schneider,
President of the EPP-CoR in the EU Committee of the Regions



“As the European elections are fast approaching, it is our local and regional leaders together with our national and European representatives that have the power to make a change. That’s why, we must all unite our forces and fight the populists who want to destroy what we have built and achieved so far. Only together we can serve our citizens, communities and regions, and make them fall in love with Europe again.”

Joseph Daul,
President of the European People’s Party



“Europe must be present in every city, region or municipality, regardless of its size. Citizens need not only to hear about Europe, they must see and feel it in their everyday lives, and local authorities have a key role to play here.”

Boyko Borissov,
Prime Minister of Bulgaria



"We, in the EPP, have a great story to tell European citizens of what we have achieved so far: we must lead the debate at local, regional, national and European levels."

Dara Murphy,
EPP Vice-President, Campaign Director for the 2019 EU elections



"To win, we will have to manage and lead change. More, we will have to make change work for every single citizen. We will have to have a coordinated message between local, national and European actors among our family: effectively repeat a well-thought, well-defined message, use successful examples, especially at the local level. Community leaders are often the providers of those services that affect a citizen's daily life the most and we have plenty of local champions among our ranks to be proud of."

Andrianos Giannou,
Youth of the EPP



"Ahead of the European Elections, we must win the hearts and minds of the European citizens. This Grassroots Engagement is a very valuable tool because town hall meetings and honest conversation is exactly what Europe needs now."

Virgilio Falco,
European Democrat Students



"Our experience in Austria has shown that when you go local and connect with citizens on the ground, it really works."

Dominik Schrott,
Austrian People's Party

We are family: EPP grassroots engagement in view of the 2019 European elections

Declaration of Sofia, 9 March 2018

European citizens want a European Union that meets their expectations and demonstrates added value through its problem-solving capacities. A socially inclusive Europe which listens and understands in order to protect, empower and defend the interests of the people. A Europe which supports cohesion as the main investment policy for all its regions. A strong, efficient and united EU is the best guarantee for our peace, freedom and prosperity, and so it should remain in the future. However, the way some crises have been handled has disappointed our citizens. A major challenge today is an increase of nationalism and extremism from both the left and right spectrum of politics. We should not allow these forces to diminish our pro-European values.

The EPP offers the way to reach a clear pro-European majority after 2019. The success of the EPP in the 2014 elections was a collective achievement. Given the current political situation, we must do even better for the 2019 European elections. We need a new dynamic and a new cohesion. The EPP is represented in all Member States at all levels of government, and we must work more intensively as one, strong, united and responsible political family. We know that reforms were successful, but they take time and now many implemented measures are beginning to bear fruit. As the EPP family, we have to communicate with courage and determination both what we have achieved and what we will achieve in the future, if we want

to avoid the EU falling into the hands of Eurosceptics and populists.

Regional and local leaders represent an added value within the EPP family: the local context very often represents the most tangible circle of belonging and the basis of democratic values. Across the EU there are about 90 000 local and regional authorities, including 311 regions, of which 75 are regional assemblies with legislative powers. Local and regional authorities implement 70% of all EU legislation. They represent 1/2 of public employment, 1/3 of public spending and 2/3 of public investment. The EU needs to make the most of the trustworthy know-how of local and regional politicians, who are best placed to ensure the full respect for subsidiarity and to connect the Union with its people in the places where they live, get educated, work, and experience good and bad times alike. Regional and local leaders can “Europeanise” local problems and find solutions at the EU level in fields such as digital economy, transport, energy, and climate change, but also with regard to migration, security and the fight against terrorism.

We are engaging in a genuine revival of the European project: our citizens must see that EPP leaders at European, national, regional and local levels are working hand in hand for them on the ground. People want a Europe based on local, regional and national realities: a Europe with a heart and a soul. The European Union needs to complement its own identity and

values with the existing regional and national identities. People want to have a real say on a tangible EU that is delivering solutions. EU decisions must therefore be taken at political levels closest to citizens. We need to make their voices heard in Brussels, and Brussel’s voice understood at home. Our citizens must see that the EPP is finding the right answers to urgent questions and delivering concrete benefits to people’s daily lives.

We, the EPP family, at European, national, regional and local levels commit to an EPP grassroots engagement in order to increase confidence in and ownership of our European Union project. By launching a series of EPP local dialogues in all the EU Member States our objective is first to listen and engage with people. We want to make sure that their views and expectations are taken on board in the EPP programme for the 2019 elections, the priorities of the EPP Spitzenkandidat and the next political mandate of the EU institutions. As Europe is the place where we live in, under the motto “Europe starts in your village/city/region”, we want to pass on a message of “unity in diversity” and of “thinking globally, acting locally”. This will allow an honest dialogue with people on areas that are often decided upon in Brussels or in Strasbourg, but actually implemented in Europe’s cities and regions. The aim should not be to build an alternative “Europe of the regions”, but rather to enable a “Europe with the regions”.



MARCH PLENARY SESSION:



Dimitris Avramopoulos, Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship will join the 128th Plenary Session of the EU Committee of the Regions on 22 March for a debate on the integration of migrants and social cohesion. Other speakers foreseen for this debate include Laura Thompson, Deputy Director General of the International Organization for Migration, Elisabeth Bartke Association of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry and Anila Noor, European Migrant Advisory Board. Later on the same day, the Plenary will be addressed by **Johannes Hahn**, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy & Enlargement Negotiations. A highlight of the second day of the Plenary, 23 March,



is the debate foreseen with **Jan Olbrycht**, MEP, on expectations of local and regional authorities in the EU towards the next multiannual financial framework. The EPP-CoR in the CoR has already been active in this topic hosting a high level debate in December 2017 and thanks to the opinion of **Marek Woźniak**, which was adopted earlier this year.

"We cannot resign from our ambitious agenda for the European Union after Brexit. The Parliament calls for continuous support after 2020 for Europe's two long standing policies – the CAP and Cohesion Policy - at the current nominal level for EU-27. Cohesion policy should further support the development



of all European regions through all three funds: ERDF, ESF and Cohesion Fund. The Parliament believes that some future oriented programmes of crucial importance for our economy, competitiveness and young people should be reinforced. We want to multiply the financing for the next generation of Horizon 2020, COSME, YEI, Erasmus+ and LIFE+. Last but not least, the Parliament recognises the need to provide EU financial support for new challenges in the field of security and defence, and to tackle the migration crisis. As a result, we call for the next MFF to be set at the level of 1,3% GNI of EU-27. If member states favour a lower level, they must decide which joint EU actions they want to reduce." **Jan Olbrycht**, MEP

Mid-term review of the implementation of the European Agenda on Migration



Own-initiative
CIVEX-VI/029

Rapporteur: **Dimitrios Kalogeropoulos** (EL/EPP), politically accountable to the Municipal Council of Palaio Faliro

"While the European Agenda on Migration falls primarily within the remit of national governments, an important role is played by local and regional authorities (LRAs) in this area."

Europe's cities and regions have been placed under considerable pressure by an irregular flow of migrants and the regions on its southern and eastern margins have become a regular arrival point for migratory and refugee flows. Given their position on the front line, the rapporteur stresses that local and regional authorities (LRAs) need to be involved in every stage of framing and implementing the European Agenda on Migration, including for setting priorities, evaluating outcomes and monitoring the consequences. At the same time, the rapporteur commends the EU's efforts to support the establishment of sustainable political and administrative structures in relation to issues of migration and asylum, and considers that these efforts should include supporting local institution-building by providing for effective funding, technical assistance and training for LRAs, so that optimum use is made of humanitarian aid and existing and future financial

resources. Moreover, he stresses the need for preventative action to help address irregular migration, help promote stability and the upholding of fundamental rights in its neighbourhood, whilst also showing solidarity to those Member States that bear a heavier burden in this regard. The opinion identifies five areas for action: (1) an immediate response and provision of help to Member States where urgent situations exist owing to increased refugee or migratory flows; (2) reducing the incentives for a continuation of irregular migration; (3) management of the EU's external borders; (4) political asylum; and (5) management of legal migration and integration of migrants into society.

Regulation on the European citizens' initiative



CIVEX-VI/028

Rapporteur: **Luc Van Den Brande** (BE/EPP), Member of the Management Board of the Flanders-Europe Liaison Agency, VLEVA

"The best place for a group of organisers to explain their initiative is the European Parliament, and it would therefore be logical for the European Parliament to take full responsibility for organising this hearing."

Praising the European Citizens Initiative (ECI), the rapporteur concurs that it can help to respond to the perceived democratic deficit of the European Union and to bridge the gap between EU citizens and European institutions and policy makers. However, whilst acknowledging that the proposed regulation is a step in the right direction towards improving the ECI, he believes there is still room to address the remaining procedural, administrative and political constraints, which would enable it to become a successful part of the EU's democratic fabric. The rapporteur is specifically concerned by the strength of the Commission's hand in terms of its involvement at all stages of the procedure. He therefore proposes that the Commission submits the request for registration to an independent committee, who shall assess the admissibility of the request for

registration. They may hold a hearing with the group of organisers before providing the Commission with a reasoned decision, upon which basis a decision can be taken. He would also like to see a greater role for the European Parliament, who could and should also act as a guarantor of political follow-up to successful ECIs and internalisation of the political message of ECIs that do not reach the required number of signatures. He further suggests that the collection period for getting the required 1 million signatures is increased to 18 months, which would be less of a deterrent for potential initiative organisers.

Enlargement: Inclusion of Western Balkan Local and Regional Authorities in EU's Macro-regional, Cross-border and other Transnational Cooperation Initiatives



CIVEX-VI/032

Rapporteur: **Franz Schausberger** (AT/EPP), Delegate of the Land of Salzburg to the Committee of the Regions

"The Western Balkan countries are part of Europe and have a shared European heritage, a shared history and a shared future and that a credible prospect of joining the EU is key to transformation in the region and thus to security, prosperity, social well-being, reconciliation and stability."

The rapporteur welcomes the Bulgarian Presidency's choice to make the Western Balkans a priority and as well as the strategy for a credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans, which was presented by the European Commission on 6

February. Stressing the role of local and regional authorities in the enlargement process, the rapporteur notes with concern that in most Balkan countries public administration at all levels of government, particularly local self-government, remains weak, with limited administrative capacity, a high degree of politicisation and corruption, a lack of transparency and few financial resources and stresses that the functioning of democratic institutions should be strengthened at regional and local level in particular. At the same time, the rapporteur believes that regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations between the countries of the Western Balkans are key prerequisites for European progress and new economic opportunities. Indeed, he stresses that macro-regional strategies (MRSs) and other EU instruments for cross-border cooperation such as EGTCs and Interreg programmes are essential building blocks for the future of the EU, noting that the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) can provide a major opportunity for the whole region. He concludes by calling on those Western Balkan countries that are not currently participating in macro-regional programmes, including also the Danube Region strategy and the Balkan-Mediterranean programme, to get involved without delay.



"I am convinced that strengthening capacities at local and regional government levels can have a positive impact on a country's development as they are essential when it comes to implementing the EU acquis at local and regional levels. Therefore I highly value the work of the Committee of Regions in this regard."

Johannes Hahn,
Commissioner for European
Neighbourhood Policy &
Enlargement Negotiations

The cost and risk of non-cohesion: the strategic value of the Cohesion policy in pursuing Treaty's objectives and facing new challenges to the European regions

Own-initiative



COTER-VI/040

Rapporteur: **Mieczysław Struk** (PL/EPP),
President of Pomeranian Region

"Regions and cities are facing unprecedented challenges, ranging from global competition, digital transformation and the rise of disruptive technologies, demographic changes and migration, the risk of poverty and social exclusion to energy security, climate change, and the loss of biodiversity. All of these challenges have a strong territorial impact with an uneven distribution of benefits and costs across the regional economies and communities of Europe."

This opinion aims to contribute to the wider reflection on the strategic role of

Cohesion Policy at a crucial juncture for its future. As highlighted in the 7th Cohesion Report, the EU economy is recovering from the economic crisis and regional disparities have just started to narrow again. However, many regions have not yet reached their pre-crisis levels of GDP per capita and employment and are now facing a significant backlog in terms of public investment. The rapporteur therefore notes that the impact of the crisis is has not been overcome. Moreover, he expresses concern about Europe's significant regional disparities in terms of employment rates and youth unemployment. Key environmental objectives are also addressed. Cohesion policy offers much potential to exploit the opportunities stemming from global transformation, but this should also be combined with Territorial Impact Assessments when designing EU public policies to maximise their efficiency. According to the rapporteur, long-term, place-based and place-sensitive strategies should be developed to better integrate the economic, social and territorial dimensions. The opinion concludes with a warning: downgrading or fragmenting the funding of Cohesion Policy would bring major political risks, calling into question the capacity of the EU to fulfil the Treaty

objectives of strengthening economic, social and territorial cohesion due to a lack of critical mass of support in many regions, meaning also lower investments in key European objectives.



"Regional policy forms the leading strip for research, growth and innovation, not just in the less developed regions. Let's not forget that Cohesion policy is not just a programme, it is one of the goals stated in the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union: "It shall promote economic, social and territorial cohesion, and solidarity among Member States."

Lambert Van Nistelrooij,
Member of the European
Parliament

A European strategy for industry: the role and perspective of regional and local authorities



Own-initiative
ECON-VI/026

Rapporteur: **Heinz Lehmann** (DE/EPP),
Member of the Saxony regional parliament

"Ensuring the future competitiveness of European industry in a rapidly changing global context is crucial for balanced and sustainable development. ... only free trade agreements, mutual recognition of standards and the elimination of tariff and

non-tariff barriers to trade can ensure free and fair access to global markets."

Industry is vitally important for Europe's regions and cities – as a source of 50 million jobs, exports and innovation. The rapporteur therefore uses this opinion to call for an industrial policy strategy at European level that responds to current and future challenges, opportunities and factors with regard to industrial competitiveness in a global context. Given that a well-functioning single market in goods and services can facilitate the integration of companies in global value chains, the rapporteur argues that its completion is essential for the success of Europe's industry. Moreover, he recalls that the European market is more important than the global market for the regions adding that competitive business services are increasingly important inter-

mediaries in terms of promoting the manufacturing industry's productivity and cost competitiveness. Looking to the future, the rapporteur proposes that the leading role of European industry is enshrined as a goal in the ninth Framework Programme for Research and Innovation. In this regard, the CoR would like efforts to meet the target of spending 3% of GDP on R&D to be stepped up and for industry's capacity for change and innovation to be strengthened by means of further thematic platforms for industrial modernisation. To conclude, the rapporteur underlines the centrality of regions and regional ecosystems, where the dialogue between SMEs, universities and research centres and local authorities is conducted effectively, to industrial modernisation and calls for a place-based approach to European industrial policy.

Ten years of the European Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy

Upcoming events



The European Covenant of Mayors celebrated its 10th anniversary in the hemicycle of the European Parliament in Brussels on 22 February. Local and regional leaders from 700 cities and regions present pledged to support the 2030 objectives of the initiative, and increase their use of innovative and climate-friendly technological solutions to tackle the challenges of climate change and the energy transition. According to statistics delivered by the European Commission Vice-President, **Maroš Šefčovič**, signatories have reduced their emissions by about 23% relative to 1990 levels. This compares with the EU's overall objective of a 20% reduction by 2020. It is a success story for EU cooperation at the local and regional level.

While the climate and energy efforts of signatories were hailed, the consensus was clear that a lot more has to be done to succeed in the climate and energy transition and deliver collectively on the long-term goals of the Paris Agreement (i.e. keeping global warming well below 2 degrees Celsius). In particular, climate and energy policies have to become part of any political decision, and cities need their citizens and

in particular their youth on board in their transition.

Further speakers at the ceremony included **Antonio Tajani**, President of the European Parliament, Commissioners **Miguel Arias Cañete** and **Carlos Moedas**, and two EPP-CoR members; **Fernando López Miras** (ES/EPP) and **Andrea Turčanová** (SK/EPP), Mayor of Prešov. Concluding a debate with CoR Covenant Ambassadors, **Cor Lamers**, President of the CoR's ENVE Commission stressed: *"I strongly believe that our cooperation is more necessary than ever if we are to reduce our common carbon footprint and work together without delay to deal with the effects of climate change. I also hope that we will be able to turn to our citizens and local communities and convince them that initiatives like the Covenant of Mayors make sense and bring a whole array of co-benefits with them. Cooperation is necessary for a healthier, cleaner and more sustainable future of the European Union."* CoR 1st Vice-President, **Markku Markkula**, also joined the ceremony.

- ➔ 11 April, CIVEX
- ➔ 12 April, ENVE
- ➔ 23 April, SEDEC
- ➔ 24 April, ECON
- ➔ 27 April, COTER
- ➔ 16-17 May, Plenary Session

Ongoing opinions

CIVEX

Reflecting on Europe: the voice of regional and local authorities to rebuild trust in the European Union – **Markku Markkula** (with **Karl-Heinz Lambertz/PES**)
Adoption foreseen October 2018

Eastern Partnership deliverables for 2020: The contribution of local and regional authorities – **Sören Herbst** (EPP/DE)
Adoption foreseen July 2018

COTER

Boosting Growth and Cohesion in EU Border Regions – **Ádám Karácsony**
Adoption foreseen July 2018

Clean ports, clean seas – port reception facilities for the delivery of waste from ships – **Spyros Spyridon**
Adoption foreseen October 2018

ECON

Public Procurement Package – **Adrian Teban**
Adoption foreseen July 2018

Fair Taxation Package – **Paul Lindquist**
Adoption foreseen October 2018

ENVE

Common rules for the internal market in natural gas – **Mauro D'Attis**
Adoption foreseen May 2018

Drinking Water directive – **Mark Weinmeister**
Adoption foreseen May 2018

Towards an 8th Environment Action Plan – **Cor Lamers**
Adoption foreseen December 2018

NAT

The EMFF beyond 2020 – Investing in Europe's Coastal Communities – **Alberto Núñez Feijóo**
Adoption foreseen May 2018

Local and regional incentives to promote healthy and sustainable diets – **Nikolaos Chiotakis**
Adoption foreseen July 2018

SEDEC

Strengthening European identity through education and culture – **Tanya Hristova**
Adoption foreseen May 2018

'Mainstreaming sport into the EU agenda post-2020' – **Roberto Pella**
Adoption at Plenary Session: 8-10 October 2018

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March 2018