

THE

# ReppORTER

December 2018

Activity report of the EPP Group in the European Committee of the Regions



# #StrongerTogether



## Highlights of Helsinki EPP Congress

EPP High-level Conference  
in Austria



European Committee  
of the Regions

# Foreword

by President Schneider

*"Bringing Europe back to the people".* That is the motto of **Manfred Weber**, who was elected our EPP *Spitzenkandidat* for the 2019 European elections at the EPP Congress in Helsinki on 8 November. During his European-wide campaign, he talked about his strong Lower-Bavarian roots and home town of Wildenberg. As European citizens, we all have a local or regional identity, and we, representatives of cities and regions in the European Union, can create a link between this identity and Europe – both in Brussels and back home.



I am pleased to note that the cooperation between our EPP-CoR Group and the EPP Party has never been closer. Thanks to our EPP Local Dialogue initiative, we have held discussions with people across our continent – from Sofia to Cork to Stockholm – on European issues that matter locally, and have been listening to citizens and their expectations ahead of next year's European elections.

At our EPP-CoR side-event in Helsinki, we were able to showcase how Europe, together with its EPP-led regions and cities, delivers on the ground with locally implemented sustainable solutions that benefit our citizens. The importance of local and regional presence was also confirmed by our EPP President **Joseph Daul**: *"No one better than you, local and regional elected representatives, can talk to Europeans, listen to their expectations, know the problems they face on a daily basis and offer them fair, realistic and ambitious solutions".*

Before the year 2018 draws to a close, at our December Plenary session we will vote on important opinions that will contribute to the future of Cohesion Policy and to many of the programmes within the EU's next budget for 2021-2027. The CoR will call for a swift and timely agreement on the Common Provisions Regulation and the overall Multiannual Financial Framework for the years 2021-2027, so that the investment programmes benefitting our cities, regions, and ultimately citizens, can start without a delay in the next programming period.

A final highlight of this year will be our **EPP high-level conference in Klosterneuburg, Austria on 10 December**, entitled *'A Europe closer to the citizens, a Europe that delivers and protects.'* I welcome you to this event, which, as one of its themes, will address 'unity in diversity', by highlighting how our cultures, identities and common values can contribute to a stronger sense of European identity.



**Michael Schneider**

President of the EPP-CoR Group

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# Members on the field



The 2018 B-Day - Mind the Broadband Gap Conference took place on 19-20 November. On the first day, Councillor **Michael Murphy** (EPP/IE) represented the CoR as a member of the jury at the European Broadband Awards. At the B-Day conference the following day, focusing this year on the recent proposals for the post-2020 Multi-annual Financial Framework, CoR Vice-President **Markku Markkula** (EPP/FI) spoke about EU funding for the 2025 broadband objectives.



**Markku Markkula** took part in the 10 year-anniversary event of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) in Budapest on 4 October. Speaking about societal innovations and the importance of human engagement, he presented some lessons learnt from his city Espoo's Innovation Garden initiative.



On 19 November, **Tanya Hristova** (EPP/BG) spoke at the European Parliament's Interparliamentary committee meeting on European cultural heritage as the CoR's rapporteur on the topic. As elected

representative of the city of Gabrovo, she referred to the city's inclusion in the Unesco's creative cities network. Cultural heritage must be given much greater importance in both formal and informal education policies for all ages to reinforce European identity, Hristova said. Culture and education – as a source of knowledge and mutual understanding - have the potential to foster a sense of belonging to the common European project, she concluded.



We congratulate member **Adam Struzik** (EPP/PL), who won the Polish award for the best voivodship Marshall in 2018. The vote was organised in October by portal-samorzadowy.pl – a news portal on local and regional affairs. Struzik is the long-serving voivodship Marshall in Poland.



**Raffaele Cattaneo** (EPP/IT) participated in the EUSALP Annual Forum 2018 in Innsbruck on 20 November, presenting the work of his region of Lombardy in the fields of green economy and sustainability. Italy, under the coordination of the region of Lombardy, will take over the Presidency to support the implementation of the European Strategy for the Alpine region in 2019.



**Soren Herbst** (EPP/DE) was invited to present his opinion on Eastern Partnership

deliverables for 2020: The contribution of local and regional authorities at the EESC Eastern Neighbours Follow-up Committee on 14 November. The rapporteur underlined cities and regions' support for the goals of the Eastern Partnership.



On 21 September, an international conference on the economic dimension of sport took place in Vienna. **Roberto Pella**, Vice-president of the Italian National Association of Municipalities and rapporteur of the EPP-CoR Opinion «Mainstreaming sport into the EU agenda post-2020», intervened in the «Economic dimension of sport» panel, highlighting not only the contribution to gross value added and to employment of the sector, but also the relevance of social and health dimensions of sport.



The annual congress of the European federation of fortified sites took place in Venice, Italy on 8 - 9 November. **Adam Karacsony** (EPP/HU) participated and presented his opinion on Creative Europe and a new European Agenda for Culture: "From Dubrovnik to Antwerp, we can see that the presence of fortified sites plays an important role in Europe's life and history. We live among these places and they are part of our common European cultural heritage that we should preserve for the future generations", he said.

# The Committee of the Regions and the European pillar of social rights

By José Ignacio Ceniceros Gonzalez, President of the region of La Rioja, Chair of the CoR's SEDEC Committee

One year on from the proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, the CoR placed the spotlight on its implementation. EPP President of the SEDEC Commission, **José Ignacio Ceniceros Gonzales** gave impulse to the organization of the joint CoR and European Commission conference on "Delivering on the European Social Pillar: A territorial perspective" on 26 November in Brussels.



The European Pillar of Social Rights reaffirms the rights that are already present in Europe's legislative and international acquis and includes rights based on new realities. The fulfilment of the objectives of the Pillar, of its principles and rights, is a joint responsibility of

the EU institutions, the Member States, the social partners and also of Europe's regions and municipalities.

*"The regional perspective of the European Pillar of Social Rights is of key importance. Implementing its principles will bring about more cohesion, equality and will guarantee prosperity for all. It is a clear example of Europe actively working to improve the quality of life of its citizens."*



**Marianne Thyssen**, European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, confirmed this when she stated that *"Our politics may be local, but the challenges we face are European or even global. The*

*Committee of the Regions squares this circle: you help us think continental, but act local. The European Pillar of Social Rights does the same. It tackles continental challenges through action that is not just European, but also national, regional and local."*

The Committee of the Regions has worked towards making the Pillar a reality notably by adopting a series of opinions. Several of those led by EPP members include "The European Pillar of Social Rights and Reflection Paper on the social dimension of Europe" by rapporteur **Mauro D'Attis** (EPP/IT), "Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture" rapporteur **Tanya Hristova** (EPP/BG), "Modernising school and higher Education" rapporteur **Csaba Borboly** (EPP/RO), and "Digital Education Action Plan" by rapporteur **Domenico Gambacorta** (IT/EPP). The CoR stresses that economic, social and territorial cohesion policies must play a key role in supporting the implementation of the Pillar and insists to fully involve local and regional authorities in that process.

## EUROPCOM



The 9<sup>th</sup> edition of EuroPcom took place on **Thursday 8 and Friday 9 November 2018** under the theme "Campaigning for Europe". With the 2019 European Parliament elections ahead and distrust in the EU still dominating national discourse and elections in the Member States, fostering democratic engagement and advocating

for the European project seem to be decisive elements in 2018 for ensuring the future of the EU.

Around 1.000 communication professionals from all the EU Member States and beyond attended the conference and shared their views at this largest event on public communication in Europe.



**ELECTIONS**  
Gearing up for the European elections



**CITIZENS**  
Fostering local and regional communication and engagement



**DIGITAL**  
Mastering digital tools and trends

# EPP Local Dialogues – latest events

## Education is the Future of Europe



On 5 October, Mayor **Gheorghe Falcă** (EPP/RO) organised an EPP Local Dialogue in Arad, Romania in the context of World Education Day, with the participation of **Franz Schausberger**, Vice-president of the EPP-CoR, representative of the Landtag of Salzburg, Austria. The debate focused on the importance of education on local and regional levels and on how education is essential for our young citizens and for the future of Europe.

## The impacts of Brexit on local economy and businesses



On 24 September, Councillor **Michael Murphy** (EPP/IE) organised an EPP Local Dialogue in Clonmel, Ireland on the theme of Brexit, with the participation of the Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, **Simon Coveney** and MEP **Sean Kelly**. Brexit will bring changes and challenges across all sectors of Tipperary from small to medium size businesses, multinationals and agriculture. The local event was about creating further awareness around the challenges, providing information on the supports available at local and national level.

## European issues in the Belgian-Dutch border region



Life in the border region of Belgium and the Netherlands was the topic of two EPP Local Dialogue events organised by MEP **Esther de Lange** (EPP/NL). On 26 September, an event in Maastricht with MEP **Jeroen Lenaers** (EPP/NL) brought together Dutch and Belgian students, cross-border workers and local residents to exchange views on European matters that are important to this cross-border region. On 21 November, the focus was on the municipality of Baarle-Nassau, which is partially located in both the Netherlands in Belgium. MEP **Ivo Belet** (EPP/BE) joined this local debate together with the Mayors of Baarle-Nassau and of the Belgian city of Baarle.

## Stockholm region and Sweden's EU membership

**Europa börjar i Stockholm**

Sverige har påverkats och utvecklas med sitt EU-medlemskap. Stockholmregionen anses vara en av de mest dynamiska och innovativa regionerna inom EU. Nu när Brexit har skakat om Europa så diskuteras och värderas medlemskapet.

Kvällens dialog sker med en av Sveriges främsta politiska kommentatorer Ulrica Schenström. EU experten Mikael Jansson samt ledamot av Regionkommittén Jelena Drenjanin.

Datum: Måndag den 19 november kl 18.00  
Plats: Blasieholmsgatan 4A, Sötteplan

Anmälan sker till: [jelena.drenjanin@europadialog.se](mailto:jelena.drenjanin@europadialog.se) eller via Facebook

Vi har 50 platser och därför är anmälan nödvändig, se evan.

Talare:

- Jelena Drenjanin** Ledamot av Regionkommittén
- Ulrica Schenström** Politisk kommentator
- Mikael Jansson** EU expert

Vad är EPPs lokala dialoger?

EPPs lokala dialoger är en serie evenemang som anordnas i hela Europa, där medborgare och EPP-ledare träffas för att diskutera EU politik av lokalt intresse och samla in medborgarnas förslag.

Dialogerna är en del av EPP:s gräsrots-engagemang efter 2019 års val till Europaparlamentet.

Syftet med EPPs lokala dialoger är att lyssna på medborgarna och se till att lokala förslag och åsikter beaktas i EU-politiken, samt att lyssna till konkreta exempel på lyckade projekt som genomförs på lokal och regional nivå.

#EPPLocalDialogue

The majority of Swedes hold a positive view of their country's EU membership, but in the shadow of Brexit, Sweden's

role in the EU is being debated. On 19 November, EPP-CoR member **Jelena Drenjanin** hosted a citizens' dialogue with the political party Nya Moderaterna to hear what expectations the people living in the Swedish capital hold for the future of Europe.

## Citizens' expectations ahead of 2019 European Elections



On 21 November, **László Majthényi** (EPP/HU), President of County Council of Vas Megye organised an EPP Local Dialogue on "What can we expect after the 2019 European Parliament elections?" The event, moderated by EPP-CoR member **József Ribányi**, collected citizens' expectations expectations towards their regional and local leaders ahead of the 2019 European Elections. The guest of the EPP Local Dialogue in Szombathely was EPP MEP **Gyula Winkler**.

## Showcasing the local impact of EU funding



On 22 November, Mayor **Emilian Oprea** (EPP/RO) hosted an EPP Local Dialogue in Chitila, sharing the example of an EU-funded project which has supported the building of a primary and secondary school in this Romanian town.

## #EPPLocalDialogue

# EPP Congress in Helsinki 7-8 November 2018

On 7 -8 November, the European People's Party (EPP) held its 25<sup>th</sup> Congress in Helsinki, Finland. Co-hosted by the Finnish political party Kokoomus, the Congress focused on the preparations for the 2019 European elections and the election of the EPP's lead candidate (Spitzenkandidat).



## EPP-led cities joining forces to deliver sustainable solutions to citizens



On 7 November, the EPP Group in the CoR organised a side event of the Congress entitled *EPP-led cities joining forces to deliver sustainable solutions for citizens*. This theme linked to the discussions at the EPP Congress, which adopted a policy paper on Sustainable Europe.

*"We are here today to highlight the political commitment and work of EPP-led cities and regions to tackle climate change, which is currently considered by EU citizens as one of the most pressing issues to be addressed"*, said EPP-CoR President **Michael Schneider** in his opening statement.

He spoke about the EPP Local Dialogue initiative as a tool for listening to people and making sure that European policies can better respond to the needs of our citizens. Speaking after President Schneider, EPP President **Joseph Daul** affirmed:

*"No one better than you, local & regional elected representatives, can talk to Europeans, listen to their expectations, know the problems they face on a daily basis & offer them fair, realistic & ambitious solutions."*

Both EPP Spitzenkandidat candidates took part in the discussions. **Manfred Weber** spoke about the future of European politics and campaigning ahead of the EU 2019 elections. Regionally and locally elected representatives are in direct contact with their citizens, and the EPP needs

to make better use of this important connection:

*"I invite local and regional politicians to have a close cooperation in view of the EPP Spitzenkandidat programme to make a successful future of our continent,"* said Weber.

**Alexander Stubb** focused his speech on the importance of investing in infrastructure and in digitalisation to make future cities better places to live: *"Digitalisation is crucial. It will provide new jobs, modern infrastructure and it will help to advance science, improve health and reduce pollution."*

In the first panel, moderated by MEP **Sirpa Pietikäinen**, Mayors **Jan Vapaavuori** of Helsinki and **Yordanka Fandakova** of Sofia and **Raffaele Cattaneo** of EPP-CoR presented concrete solutions that cities

and regions across Europe have implemented in the field of environmental protection, climate change mitigation, sustainable development and protection of biodiversity. In his address, **Jyrki Katainen**, European Commissioner for Jobs, Growth, Investment & Competitiveness, gave some good examples of cities that are implementing the transition towards a circular economy and invited cities and regions to look into the possibilities offered by the European Funds for Strategic Investments (EFSI).

**Markku Markkula**, First Vice-President of the CoR, moderated the panel on citizens' expectations towards the future European Commission to achieve a sustainable Europe. EPP-CoR members **Apostolos Tzitzikostas**, **Deirdre Forde**, **Nikola Dobroslavic** as well as **Bianca Debaets**, State Secretary, Brussels Government, took part in this debate and shared the lessons learned from concrete projects in their regions.

Other speakers of the event included Minister of Justice, Vice-Chair of Kokoomus **Antti Häkkänen**, EPP-EP Group Vice-Chair and coordinator of the EU 2019 elections, MEP **Esther De Lange**, and **Dara Murphy**, EPP Vice-President and Campaign Director for the 2019 European Elections.



## City of Espoo implementing UN sustainable development goals

The morning's side event was followed by a study visit to the city of Espoo, upon the invitation of **Markku Markkula** and the Mayor of Espoo, **Jukka Mäkelä**. During this informative visit, EPP-CoR members and Finnish Kokoomus guests had the chance to visit Espoo by electric

buses, see the newly built metro station in Otaniemi and learn about the emission-free geothermal energy heating plant currently under construction in the area. During lunch at Espoo Innovation Garden, **Sirpa Hertell** (EPP/FI) and the representative of energy company Fortum spoke

about Espoo's commitment to become a carbon-neutral city by 2030, and Markku Markkula presented Espoo's role in the UN Leadership programme, under which selected cities undertake to serve as pioneers of sustainable development.



## For a Better Europe - Manfred Weber elected EPP Spitzenkandidat



On the second day of the Congress, The European People's Party (EPP) elected **Manfred Weber** as the EPP's candidate for President of the European Commission, ahead of the May 2019 European Parliament elections. Following the announcement of the result, EPP President **Joseph Daul** gave the following statement:

*"I want to congratulate Manfred Weber on his election as our lead candidate for the 2019 European elections. For the upcoming elections, the EPP Campaign will address the*

*concerns of all European citizens. Our lead candidate will travel to the four corners of Europe, north, south, east and west. We will listen to our citizens' concerns and engage with them about the direction Europe should take for the next 5 years. We will work tirelessly to continue placing the EU at the service of the people."*

EPP-CoR President **Michael Schneider** congratulated Manfred Weber:

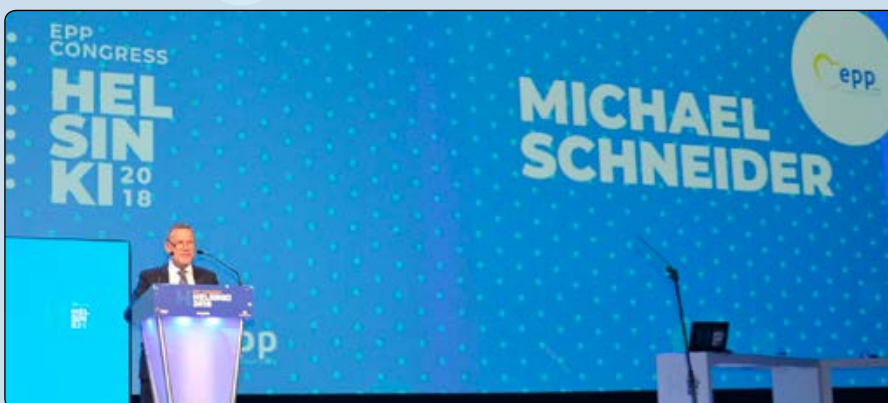
*"I was happy to see that both of our candidates stand behind the principle of multi-level*

*governance. The European Commission will continue to be in safe EPP hands with Manfred Weber at the helm and I congratulate him on his Spitzenkandidat nomination. Manfred has long been a friend of the EPP Group at the Committee of the Regions and has a deep appreciation for giving the regions and cities of Europe a voice in the EU."*

The EPP-CoR Group is committed to ensuring a successful outcome to the 2019 European elections for the party and for the citizens of Europe, and Mr Weber can rely on his EPP colleagues at the Committee of the Regions for their support.

Addressing the EPP Congress on 7 November, President Schneider said:

*"I am pleased to say that the cooperation between our EPP-CoR group and the EPP, led by Joseph Daul, has never been better. Thanks to our EPP Local Dialogue events in Europe's cities and regions, our leaders can engage with citizens on the ground and talk about EU politics that matter for people's everyday lives."*



# A Europe closer to its citizens, a Europe that delivers and protects

10 December 2018, Klosterneuburg, Austria  
A high-level event of the European People's Party



Die neue  
Volkspartei



## A Europe closer to its citizens, a Europe that delivers and protects

Klosterneuburg, 10 December 2018

#EPPCoR



Less than a year ahead of the European elections, the EPP-CoR Group, together with the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) and the EPP, will organise a high-level event entitled *A Europe closer to its citizens, a Europe that delivers and protects* on 10 December in the Babenbergerhalle in Klosterneuburg.

The focus of the high-level debate will be on fostering the sense of European

belonging based on a strengthened culture of subsidiarity and on the passionate regeneration of the European project, which are indispensable preconditions to a more dynamic European Union of tomorrow.

How to support the EPP values by investing in freedom, safety and security, as well as active citizenship, will be the main subjects of the discussions. Building

on the motto of the Austrian Presidency, the first panel will address the question of a Europe closer to its citizens, delivering and protecting on the ground. The second panel will tackle the question of strengthening unity in diversity, by highlighting how our cultures, identities and common values can contribute to a stronger sense of European identity.

The high-level debate will take place in the context of the EPP political work ahead of the European elections of May 2019, and – more in particular – of the EPP Grassroots Engagement in view of these elections. Through this engagement – a successful EPP-CoR initiative launched in Sofia, Bulgaria in March 2018 - leaders at local and regional level, working hand in hand with politicians from national and European levels, engage in direct dialogue with citizens, listen to their ideas and concerns on Europe and discuss issues that people experience in their daily lives. The initiative foresees a series of EPP local dialogues – citizen debates - in all EU member states leading up to the 2019 European elections.

Politicians elected at regional and local level across Europe and some 20 high-level speakers are expected to participate to the event, including, at his first public official appearance since his election by the EPP Congress of Helsinki on 7 November, the EPP candidate for the Presidency of the European Commission (*Spitzenkandidat*) **Manfred Weber**. Other confirmed high-level speakers include **Sebastian Kurz**, Chancellor of Austria and **Günther Oettinger**, European Commissioner for Budget and Human Resources and many others. Together they will send a strong signal for a united and value-based Europe that protects its citizens.

#EPPCoR  
#EPPLocalDialogue

## UNFCCC COP24 in Katowice, Poland



COP24 to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) will take place in Katowice, Poland on 3-14 December. Vice-President **Markku**

**Markkula** (EPP/FI), ENVE Chair **Cor Lamers** (EPP/NL) and **Sirpa Hertell** (EPP/FI) will be part of Committee of the Regions' official delegation to the Conference.

The main aim of COP24 will be to work out and adopt a package of decisions ensuring the full implementation of the Paris Agreement. The Conference will also

focus on fostering a 'Facilitative Dialogue' intended to support the implementation of national commitments. The Committee of the Regions has called for systematic decentralised consultations with sub-national levels of governance during the process of defining and revising the Nationally Defined Contributions (NDCs) involving stakeholders from key sectors of activity, thus building a participatory method. The NDCs should recognise the role of sub-national authorities in the achievement of the international climate commitments, the CoR underlined in its recent opinion on climate governance after 2020.

## Albania's road to the EU

The CoR Working Group on the Western Balkans, chaired by EPP-CoR member **Franz Schausberger** met on 13 November in Albania, following the invitation by Mayor of Tirana. From the EPP-CoR Group, **Nikola Dobroslavić** and **Dimitrios Kalogeropoulos** also attended the meeting.

The debate focused primarily on the recent developments in Albania's relationship with the EU, as Albania is now close to starting the negotiations for EU membership in 2019. Members also exchanged views on the ongoing Albanian municipal reform, which has already resulted in a substantial reduction in number of municipalities but has not yet brought the expected results as regards real decentralisation effects with a transfer of some important competences from central to local

and regional level and the fiscal capacity of municipal finances.



*"Albania is on a good path towards starting the negotiations for its EU membership. It is important to involve local and regional authorities in this process from the very beginning. The territorial reform has started*

*but there are still further steps necessary and a lot of challenges remain",* said Franz Schausberger.

For the first time, the meeting of the Working Group was webstreamed thanks to the support offered by the EU delegation in Tirana, so all Albanian municipalities could follow a live discussion with the CoR members.

*"Albania has our full support in its direction to the EU, but all the criteria must be fulfilled. It is important to include regions in these processes. Active participation of local and regional self-government will lead to faster and more successful completion of the accession reforms and in this way they will confirm their role and potential in society",* underlined Nikola Dobroslavić.

## Summit of EPP regional and local leaders in view of the EU 2019 elections

On 16 March 2019 the EPP-CoR together with the Romanian National Liberal Party and the EPP will organise a Summit of EPP regional and local leaders in view of the EU 2019 elections.

The Summit will take place in the context of the EPP's political work ahead of the European elections of May 2019, and – more in particular – of the EPP Grassroots Engagement in view of these elections. Through this grassroots engagement – a successful EPP CoR initiative launched in Sofia (Bulgaria) in March 2018 - leaders at local and regional level have the oppor-

tunity to work hand in hand with those from national and European level in order to listen to citizens and provide concrete solutions to issues that people face in their daily lives.

Over 800 politicians elected at regional and local level across Europe and some 20 high-level speakers are expected to participate to the event on March 2019 in Bucharest, Romania, including the EPP candidate for the President of the European Commission (the Spitzenkandidat), **Manfred Weber**.



# Overview of the December Plenary session



The 132<sup>nd</sup> Plenary session of the Committee of the Regions takes place on 5-6 December 2018 in the Hemicycle of the European Parliament in Brussels. Highlights include a debate on the future of the Cohesion Policy with **Corina Crețu**, Commissioner for Regional Policy as well as a debate on Brexit with European Chief Negotiator **Michel Barnier**. Five EPP-led opinions are scheduled for adoption at this last Plenary session of the year.



## EPP-led opinions on the agenda

### Common Provisions Regulation

COTER-VI/045

Co-rapporteurs **Michael Schneider**, (EPP/DE), President of the EPP-CoR Group and **Catusca Marini**, (PES/IT), President of the PES-CoR Group

Cohesion Policy is the main European investment instrument aimed at strengthening economic, social and territorial cohesion within the European Union. The co-rapporteurs' draft report on the Common Provisions Regulation (CPR), the legal framework for the Cohesion Policy for the years 2021-2027, was unanimously adopted at the COTER commission meeting on 24 October, giving the CoR a strong voice in view of the upcoming negotiations at the European level.



The co-rapporteurs insist on a swift and timely agreement on the CPR for the years 2021-2027, which should continue to be based on the principles of partnership and multilevel governance. They call for further simplification, for example by reducing administrative burden stemming from state aid regulations. Cohesion Policy should remain available for all regions in the European Union, but there is a need for higher co-financing rates for all three categories of regions as initially proposed by the European Commission. They call for the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) to be reintroduced

into the CPR as well as European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) to remain anchored within Cohesion Policy.

“ *The unanimous support of our COTER members for our report demonstrates a strong unity within Europe's cities and regions and Cohesion Alliance partners for a better and more effective Cohesion Policy that brings concrete results to EU citizens. Let us work together to secure the important role of the Cohesion Policy after 2020 as pillar of European integration and solidarity!*

Co-rapporteur  
**Michael Schneider**

market failures and sub-optimal investment situations to reduce the investment gap in targeted sectors, and above all in regions that lag behind, to achieve the Union's policy objectives.



” The EPP-CoR rapporteur **Konstantinos Agorastos** welcomes the European Commission's ambition to further support investment in Europe and demands that the economic, social and territorial cohesion of the Union be included among the objectives of the InvestEU Programme.

### The InvestEU programme

ECON-VI/039

Rapporteur: **Konstantinos Agorastos**, (EPP/EL) Governor of the Region of Thessaly

The InvestEU Programme proposed by the European Commission aims to bring together under one roof the multitude of EU financial instruments currently available to support investment in the EU, making EU funding for investment projects in Europe simpler, more efficient and more flexible.

Total investment remains below pre-crisis levels in many Member States and regions. More importantly, the current investment levels and forecasts do not cover the Union's structural investment needs in the face of technological change and global competitiveness, including for innovation, skills, infrastructure, SMEs and key societal challenges. Consequently, continued support is necessary to address

“ *InvestEU must be geared to results, especially job creation and addressing regional disparities, and this can be more effectively achieved through close coordination with local and regional authorities*

”  
**Konstantinos Agorastos**

The rapporteur highlights the importance of the Committee of the Regions' involvement particularly in the Advisory Board of the EU Invest administrative system to have a local presence. This should be defined in consultation with the national, regional or local authorities concerned, and should as a matter of priority be developed in Member States or regions that face difficulties in developing projects under the InvestEU Fund, or which suffer from a significant and persistent investment gap.

## The Single Market Programme

ECON-VI/038

Rapporteur: **Deirdre Forde**, (EPP/IE),  
Councillor of Cork County Council

For the next long-term EU budget 2021-2027, the Commission is proposing a new, dedicated €4 billion programme to empower and protect consumers and enable Europe's many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to take full advantage of a well-functioning Single Market.

The Single Market Programme is one of Europe's greatest achievements. It has created thousands of jobs, offered greater choice to consumers at lower prices, strengthened industrial competitiveness, allowed people to live study and work where they want and has created new opportunities and growth for businesses and strengthened global competitiveness for European businesses.



**Deirdre Forde**, EPP-CoR rapporteur, in her presentation during the ECON meeting underlined the Single Market's importance for the economic and social development of local and regional economies:

“ *The internal market is a key EU policy for the economic well-being of cities and regions. It is generally viewed as creating economic benefits that result in enhanced competitiveness for the regions making up the EU.* ”

The rapporteur highlighted the fact that local and regional authorities have an important role in ensuring that the single market functions effectively. “Citizens’ everyday life covers single market issues such as Consumer Welfare and Public Procurement and it is our duty to ensure that citizens have access to information about their rights, business opportunities and market information”, said Forde.

## Digital Europe programme

SEDEC-VI/044

Rapporteur: **Markku Markkula**, (EPP/FI),  
City councillor of Espoo and First Vice-  
President of the European Committee of  
the Regions

To support the overall objective of increasing the EU's international competitiveness, the European Commission proposed the first Digital Europe Programme (DEP). It provides ambitious funding and investments worth €9.2 billion to further develop and reinforce Europe's strategic digital capacities.



EPP-CoR rapporteur **Markku Markkula** welcomes DEP investments in advanced high-capacity digital infrastructure such as 5G networks, supercomputers and artificial Intelligence, which are essential for the deployment of digital services and technologies in Europe. He stresses the pivotal role of cities and regions in providing such digital services and in creating and managing digital infrastructure. For this reason, the Programme's objectives should include increasing local collaboration and European partnerships to speed up digital transformation. Besides, cities and regions should be encouraged to become forerunners in participating in the DEP, especially as a spatial testing ground for new applications.

In his opinion, Markkula emphasises the importance of establishing the network of European Digital Innovation Hubs (DIHs) with sufficient coverage for all regions. These Hubs will be 'one-stop shops' for SMEs and public administrations, providing access to technological expertise and experimentation facilities, and advice to better assess the business case of digital transformation projects. While the impact assessment carried out by the European Commission in the preparation for the Programme clearly states that the DIHs shall have a strong regional dimension, this is not reflected in the proposed Programme.

“ *To make the digital revolution happen and to be competitive, we need a stable and clear legal environment, favourable conditions to stimulate innovation and allow all players to tap into the new market dynamics. This will allow European companies to become global leaders.* ”

## Neighbourhood and the World

CIVEX-VI/038

Rapporteur: **Hans Janssen**, (EPP/NL)  
Mayor of Oisterwijk

For the next 2021-2027 programming period, the European Commission has proposed a 30% increase to the external action budget, from the current €94.5 billion to €123 billion in 2021-2027. The aim would be to simplify the use of funding and make it much more flexible and effective to address today's global challenges.

The external action budget will be the EU's main tool for supporting its partner countries in their political and economic transformations towards sustainable development, stability, consolidation of democracy, socio-economic development and the eradication of poverty. This will also be the tool to help the neighbourhood countries in their economic approximation to the EU's Single Market.



The first proposal for a regulation concerns the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) with €89.2 billion foreseen: a new innovative instrument that didn't exist before. The second proposal is about the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA III), which would consist in €14.5 billion and will offer increased support to EU candidate countries and potential candidates on their path towards fulfilling the EU accession criteria through reforms.

“ *It is great to see more acknowledgement for the crucial role of local and regional authorities in the EU's external policy, but in my view, real acknowledgement should also translate to an earmarked budget* ”

says rapporteur **Hans Janssen**

# Upcoming events

→ COP 24, Katowice, Poland, 3-14 December
→ EPP Group Meeting, Klosterneuburg, Austria, 10 December
→ Working Group on Relations with Turkey, Ankara, Turkey, 11 December
→ ECON Commission meeting, 13 December
→ COTER Commission meeting, 14 December
→ CAFA Commission meeting, 22 January 2019
→ CIVEX Commission meeting, 25 January 2019
→ ENVE Commission meeting, 28 January 2019
→ NAT Commission meeting, 29 January 2019
→ 133 <sup>rd</sup> CoR Plenary Session, 6-7 February 2019
→ 6 <sup>th</sup> Task Force Ukraine meeting, 13 February 2019
→ ECON Commission meeting, 14 February 2019
→ SEDEC Commission meeting, Palermo, Italy, 18-19 February 2019
→ 8 <sup>th</sup> European Summit of Regions and Cities, Bucharest, Romania, 14-15 March 2019
→ Summit of EPP Regional and Local Leaders in view of EU 2019 Elections, Bucharest, Romania 16 March 2019

## Ongoing opinions

### CIVEX

Tackling online disinformation: a European Approach - **Olgierd Geblewicz**  
Adoption Foreseen in February 2019

### COTER

Road Safety and Automated mobility – **Jozsef Ribányi**  
Adoption foreseen April 2019

### ECON

‘Socioeconomic transformation of coal regions in Europe’ – **Mark Speich**  
Adoption foreseen June 2019

### ENVE

Towards an 8<sup>th</sup> Environment Action Plan – **Cor Lamers**  
Adoption foreseen February 2018

### NAT

Digitalisation in the health sector – **Fernando López Miras**  
Adoption foreseen February 2019

‘Active and Healthy Ageing’ – **Birgitta Sacrédeus**  
Adoption foreseen June 2019

‘Agro-pastoralism’ – **Jacques Blanc**  
Adoption foreseen October 2019

### SEDEC

A renewed European Agenda for Research and Innovation – **Birgitta Sacrédeus**  
Adoption foreseen February 2019

Artificial Intelligence for Europe – **Jan Trei**  
Adoption foreseen February 2019

Creative Europe and a New European Agenda for Culture – **Adam Janos Karacsony**  
Adoption foreseen February 2019

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