

THE

ReppORTER

July 2017

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



Brindisi External Seminar

Enlargement Day 2017

**Interview with
Commissioner Violeta Bulc**



European Committee
of the Regions

Foreword

by **President Schneider**

Dear Members,
Dear friends,

Cooperation and partnership, those are the current 'hot' words in European politics. During the past two years, not a month has gone by without Commissioners, Ministers or key MEPs calling for more involvement of the regional and local authorities in solving crises and tackling the major challenges Europe faces today.

During our last plenary session in May we had three debates with high-level guests: President Tajani from the European Parliament, Commission Vice President Katainen and Commissioner Oettinger, addressing our Members on the future of Europe as well as the future budget of the Union. Each speaker highlighted the role of the LRAs as closest to the citizens, even stating that we local and regional decision-makers should let go of the traditional idea of only focusing on grassroots issues and think bigger.

These words were music to our ears – we know that we are the 'missing link' between Brussels and our citizens that can enhance and strengthen European solidarity and prosperity.

Now we have to make sure that these calls aren't just words. Two strong initiatives from our house serve as fine examples of how actions speak louder than words for us regional and local leaders.

First, the Cohesion Alliance was initiated through the adoption of my opinion on the Future of Cohesion Policy after 2020. We call for an alliance for a strong and effective EU Cohesion Policy beyond 2020 during these challenging times, when the pressures on the EU budget are also strong. Our priorities lie in a flexible and simplified policy that covers all regions while also maintaining the current overall share of the EU's budget. The Cohesion Alliance has quickly picked up interested parties and we expect to bring fore concrete examples and know-how to shape the future of this EU's strongest investment tool.

The second initiative, Reflecting on Europe, brings the citizens' voices from all over Europe to shape the future formation of the Union. During the next few years, we have an opportunity to shape the future EU27 towards a more democratic and open direction. Gathering direct feedback from the citizens and combining it with our experiences offers unprecedented insight into what works in our Union and what – and moreover how – we should improve it.

These examples could be continued with regional investment platforms or pushing for concrete climate action through the Covenant of Mayors; they show the wide experience and knowledge that can be derived from our cities and regions as well as our commitment into real action and benefits of our citizens. These are welcomed directions, where I am happy to see our EPP Members leading the way.



Michael Schneider

President of the EPP-CoR Group

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael Schneider".

This issue:

- ➔ **Foreword**
by EPP-CoR President
Michael Schneider p. 2
- ➔ **Enlargement Day 2017** p. 3
- ➔ **Brindisi EPP External Seminar** p. 4
- ➔ **President Schneider in Poland** p. 5
- ➔ **Tajani, Katainen, Oettinger – highlights from the May plenary session** p. 6
- ➔ **JULY PLENARY SESSION:**
Overview of the July Plenary Session p. 7
- ➔ **EPP Group meeting: Making Europe fit for the 21st century** p. 7
- ➔ **EPP Opinions in the upcoming Plenary Session** p. 8
- ➔ **Smart Regulation for SMEs**
Christian Buchmann p. 8
- ➔ **Energy Union and Clean Energy**
Bruno Hrančić p. 8
- ➔ **Managing Migration along the Central Mediterranean Route**
Hans Janssen p. 9
- ➔ **An European Strategy for Low-Emission Mobility**
József Ribànyi p. 9
- ➔ **Territorial Classification and Typologies**
Mieczysław Struk p. 10
- ➔ **EPP fact-finding mission in Ukraine** p. 10
- ➔ **Budapest External Meeting** p. 11
- ➔ **Upcoming events** p. 11
- ➔ **Ongoing opinions** p. 11
- ➔ **Interview with Commissioner Violeta Bulc** p. 12
- ➔ **EUWRC EPP Workshop** p. 12

Enlargement Day 2017

The 3rd Enlargement Day gathered decision-makers and experts on EU enlargement to Brussels on June 1.

During the opening session MEP **David McAllister** (EPP/DE) made clear that *“the EU enlargement is too often seen only as a process of Member States, but it is much more: it is a process concerning citizens and therefore strongly involves local and regional authorities.”* He pointed out that citizens should be the focus of the EU enlargement process, therefore local and regional authorities should be involved as much as possible as they have the strongest connection to ordinary citizens.

Commissioner **Johannes Hahn**, responsible for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement, stated in his message that local and regional authorities have the strongest outreach to citizens of the Western Balkans and are crucial in the enlargement process - which is why it is also very important for him to have the EPP-CoR member Franz Schausberger as his special advisor.



appeal to the European Union to put a stronger focus on the development in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Dimitrios Kalogeropoulos, co-chair of the JCC Serbia, underlined the importance of strengthening the connection between Serbia and the EU especially on the local and regional level: *“Serbia has always identified the European Union as a priority. There has been a great progress concerning the preconditions for an EU membership.”* In this context he also highlighted Serbia’s efforts to reduce corruption and its progress when it comes to minorities. Lastly he pointed out that the Western Balkans are expected to make huge efforts, but at the same time the European Union also has to speed up to provide stability and tranquillity.

The first panel debate focused on dynamics and stability within the enlargement process. Representatives of the Euro-

pean Commission, the European Policy Centre and the Association of Kosovo Municipalities agreed that the perspective of an EU membership was and still is very important for the development of countries in the Western Balkans. The criteria candidate countries have to fulfil are necessary for stability within the country to create a solid living environment for citizens. Furthermore the experts underlined the essential role of local and regional authorities when it comes to development and progress in stability and economic growth.

During the second panel debate, which was about connectivity, a non-functioning and too heavily regulated electricity market was identified as one of the major obstacles for the economy on the Western Balkans. Therefore experts see it as more important to improve governance, ensure a stable market and stronger exploit renewable energy sources.



Co-chair of the WG Western Balkans, **Franz Schausberger**, reported about the positive development when it comes to local and regional authorities in Albania and mentioned as examples the improved administrative quality within municipalities due to a major administrative reform and more financial support for local and regional authorities. On the other hand he pointed out that in Bosnia and Herzegovina the situation is quite different: Due to a complicated domestic situation the national level hasn’t involved local and regional authorities at any point during the enlargement process so far. Therefore especially mayors are sending a dramatic



Brindisi External Seminar

Modern transport solutions vital for cohesion of European regions and cities like Brindisi



"The transport system employs more than 11 million people across the European Union. It is like our lymphatic system, fundamental to the cohesion of the EU territories. However, it needs to be modernized". – underlined President of the European Parliament, **Antonio Tajani** in his keynote address to the conference 'Cities and regions developing a territorial-based trans-European transport network' in Brindisi, Italy on 16 June.

The event organised by the EPP Group in the European Committee of the Regions and hosted by its Vice-President, **Mauro D'Attis** gathered numerous local and regional representatives, transport experts, stakeholders and media from across Europe.

Need for investments and intermodality were expressed by majority of the conference participants, with Antonio Tajani specifically referring to the TEN-T corridors – "We need to strengthen ongoing projects on trans-European networks, extending them to other cities like Brindisi" – a call strongly supported by Mr D'Attis. The EPP-CoR Group Vice President noted that the "Italian Adriatic coast is waiting to be considered in full by the strategic transport priorities of the European Union" with Italian Junior Minister of Labour and Social Policies, **Massimo Cassano** suggesting Puglia's role should be more central within the

Scandinavian-Mediterranean Corridor.

In his opening remarks **Michael Schneider**, President of the EPP-CoR Group expressed his conviction that territorial-based TEN-T policy should ensure accessibility and connectivity for all regions of the Union, thus contributing further to their sustainable economic growth and long-term competitiveness – "We insist on the need to strengthen the role of local and regional authorities in the political, operational, technical and implementing management bodies of the TEN-T infrastructure projects" – he underlined.

First of the two panels of the conference discussed how a thriving European Transport strategy can support development and job creation. Good examples of Port Authority of Brindisi use of the European Funds, Bratislava's investment in rail networks and Italian Transport Regulatory Authority in protecting rights of passengers were presented.

In the second panel participants could learn more about best practices and European support to regional and local authorities in targeted public and private investments in transport infrastructure or systems. They included examples of innovative financial schemes and instruments successfully implemented in Bulgaria, raised competitiveness of an Italian region thanks to its new highway connection. A positive feedback

from Murcia on the Mediterranean Corridor raising its competitiveness and from private sector calling for use of electro-mobility in cities were also highlighted.

Members of the EPP-CoR Group concluded the meeting by adopting a declaration on the topic, underlining that a territorial-based TEN-T policy can only be achieved by properly applying the principles of a bottom-up, multilevel governance approach and subsidiarity, encouraging greater synergies between different funding instruments and contributions from supranational, national, regional and local sources, together with public-private partnerships to alleviate this.

Local authorities are keen to deliver real results in this area on the ground, motivated by Antonio Tajani's words from the conference:

"The dream of Alcide De Gasperi, Konrad Adenauer and other Christian democrats led to seventy years of peace and prosperity for Europe. Like we look at them, some years from now, our children will look at us, tomorrow. Let us make sure that they judge us on the basis of our achievements, not on our failures."

BRINDISI DECLARATION:

Cities and Regions Developing a Territorial-Based Trans-European Transport Network

Declaration of the EPP Group in the European Committee of the Regions

Brindisi, 16 June 2017

We, the members of the European People's Party Group in the European Committee of the Regions,

1. Acknowledge that transport is a major contributor to a prosperous EU economy; it generates trade, fosters economic growth and provides millions of jobs. We encourage the development of a competitive EU transport industry by promoting policies that are secure, innovative, efficient and environmentally friendly. As such, we believe that the trans-European transport network policy provides substantial support for the construction and development of transport infrastructure across the European Union, allowing the seamless, safe and sustainable mobility of persons and goods.
2. Point out also that the planning, development and operation of trans-European transport networks (TEN-T) play a substantial part in achieving major European Union objectives as defined in the Europe 2020 Strategy, "the White Paper on Transport 2011" and, the 10 priorities of the Juncker Commission, such as the smooth functioning of the internal market and the strengthening of economic, social and territorial cohesion.
3. Support a territorial-based TEN-T policy that ensures accessibility and connectivity for all regions of the Union, thus contributing further to their sustainable economic growth and long-term competitiveness. We commit therefore to work for the success of a territorial-based TEN-T policy that connects countries from the south to the north and from east to west throughout the European continent, closing the gaps between national transport networks and removing impediments that hamper the economic development of our regions and cities.
4. Underline that a territorial-based TEN-T policy can only be achieved by properly applying the principles of a bottom-up, multilevel governance approach and subsidiarity - engaging all levels of governance to work in partnership. Furthermore, we insist on the need to better include local and regional authorities (LRAs), which are in many cases responsible for the maintenance of transport infrastructure. As such, LRAs are involved in the political, operational, technical and implementing management bodies of the TEN-T infrastructure projects; however, maintaining the Member States' and European Commission's role in the coordination process is crucial.
5. Commit to providing our expertise together with strong political leadership in order to make full use of the TEN-T policy as an instrument to modernise and expand transport networks for all modes of transport and to all corners of Europe. To this extent, we welcome the financial and technical support from the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) and other relevant EU initiatives such as the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the INTERREG programme and Horizon 2020.
6. Strongly support targeted public and private investments in transport infrastructure and systems which can generate considerable direct and indirect employment effects at a time when unemployment remains high in some EU countries. We encourage greater synergies between different funding instruments and contributions from supranational, national, regional and local sources, together with public-private partnerships to alleviate this. Furthermore, we highlight the need to strengthen the capacity of LRAs to use the financial tools provided by the European Investment Bank (EIB) in delivering investments for the fulfilment of the policy's objectives.
7. Recognise that the nine core network corridors lead the way in implementing the TEN-T. However, we point out that there is a lack of financial resources for developing local and regional infrastructure and small-scale infrastructure in border and remote areas which are particularly crucial for the sustainable development of Europe's regions. To this end, we urge the renewal of the CEF's economic commitment by increasing its finances and, in part by encouraging initiatives to implement the comprehensive networks and the system for linking up with the TEN-T core network corridors in order to fill in the missing links.
8. Support the extension of the current TEN-T network through the completion of the Baltic-Adriatic corridor, including the extension of the entire Ionian-Adriatic coast to Brindisi, on the one hand, and to the southern tip of Greece, on the other. We support the European Parliament's invitation to the participating countries to focus their efforts on the implementation of projects that are covered by the TEN-T network and other current interventions to extend the TEN-T network towards the South-East Europe/Eastern Adriatic coast. These projects have the potential to close the existing infrastructure gap in the Adriatic-Ionian area, such as the highway on the Adriatic-Ionian east coast, the high-speed rail on the Italian-Adriatic coast and other projects by strengthening road, sea and air connections between east and west.

President Schneider in Poland



Upon invitation by **Grzegorz Schetyna**, leader of Platforma Obywatelska (Polish EPP member party), EPP-CoR President **Michael Schneider** was a special guest at the conference **Polish local self-government in the European Union/United Europe** organized on the occasion of 27th anniversary of intro-

ducing local and regional self-governance in Poland. The event gathered most important politicians from the Polish EPP parties, MEPs, MPs and local and regional representatives.

Addressing the audience President Schneider stated:

"Looking at Poland's experience in building self-governance since 1990, I can firmly state that your political will and commitment to local democracy and determination have brought good results that transformed the political landscape in Poland. It was not easy to move from the totalitarian communist system and create new structures, new institutions and establish proper power relations between the central government and the newly created local gov-

ernments. This experience, this success should be shared and applied in other parts of Europe, in the states where there is a fight to construct a true democracy.

Poland is a good example of a struggle for a more democratic country, for a more democratic European Union. You need to continue on this path, to make local and regional levels even stronger! Europe needs a strong Poland; we need strong regions that have capacity to implement the EU programmes with success. Poland has proven since its accession to the EU in 2004 and already before that has ability to manage the EU programmes in the partnership of all levels of government. This successful shared management allows building up economic, social and territorial cohesion and should be continued."

Tajani, Katainen, Oettinger – highlights from the May plenary session

The 123rd plenary session of the European Committee of the Regions hosted three high profile guests: European Parliament President **Antonio Tajani**, Commission Vice President **Jyrki Katainen** and Commissioner **Günther H. Oettinger**.

The debate 'Reflecting on Europe' opened with President **Tajani** highlighting three key priorities for him: security, migration and youth unemployment, continuing that "as local representatives, you can have a leading role in communicating Europe to our citizens at the local level.

One MEP may have a constituency of 300,000 citizens involving ten or more local and regional councils.

We need your help in getting Europe closer to its citizens. Above all, we must ensure that our communication is a two-way exercise. We must listen more than we speak, and we must make sure that the ideas and the concerns of the citizens pass through to our decision-making process", President Tajani complemented the CoR initiative "Reflecting on Europe".



European Commission Vice President **Jyrki Katainen**, Commissioner for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness addressed the Members in a debate on the Future of Europe. Mr Katainen stressed that "silent ownership is not enough to support the EU" and urged the Members not to limit themselves as regional or local authorities to Cohesion Policy or regional issues. The Vice President is an ardent supporter of smart specialisation and smart city approaches and he stated that most probably the next EU budget will be smaller, so there must be reflection on how to use Cohesion Policy more efficiently and make more with

less, combining it more efficiently with EFSI.

CoR President **Markku Markkula** addressed VP Katainen and the Commission white paper with a new proposal: "we need an agile and durable sixth scenario seen from a regional and local perspective. We want a more transparent and democratic Union that defends the principles of subsidiarity, partnership and multilevel govern-



ance. A Union that supports cities and regions as catalysers and enablers for new jobs and sustainable growth but also for entrepreneurship, innovation and digitalisation. We need a Union that secures an effective budget based on reliable own resources and reflecting the European solidarity."

Günther H. Oettinger, Commissioner for Budget and Human Resources, answered questions on the next Multiannual Finan-

cial Framework (MFF), future Cohesion Policy and further cooperation, including a proposal for a regional aspect within the country-specific recommendations. The future of the Cohesion Policy as well as the modernisation and development of the structural programmes were an important share in Commissioner Oettinger's address to the Members where he strongly advocated for more involvement and engagement from local and regional authorities because "the more we can show added value, simplify and showcase results – the more we will have a stable and sustainable future Cohesion Policy for everyone".

The case for simplification and better projects was also a focal point for Commissioner Oettinger, who stated that "it's all about a budget focused on results" and hinting at the direction of gaining simplification already during 2017 through changes in the budget regulation. Mr Oettinger encouraged Members to bring forward their priorities for future Cohesion funding while also encouraged them to think carefully about the type of projects to be co-financed, focusing on sustainable actions such as digital infrastructure e.g. rural broadband networks. President **Schneider** also advocated for sensible projects and to stop wasting money, as the problem of thematic concentration of structural funds' projects has often ended up straightjacketing regions into unsustainable projects. "We need a territorial place-based approach to correct the situation. Regions know what will work in their areas and how best to use the money sustainably", Mr Schneider concluded.

JULY PLENARY SESSION:



Overview July ➔ Plenary Session



The 124th Plenary Session of the European Committee of the Regions takes place July 12-13 in the European Parliament's Hemicycle. The plenary session marks the mid-term for the current CoR leadership and in the beginning of the plenary, the Presidency will change from the EPP President



Markku Markkula to Karl-Heinz Lambertz (PES). Mr Markkula will continue as the 1st Vice President until the end of mandate.

Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, **Carlos Moedas**, will discuss with the CoR Members related to the opinion on local and regional dimension of Horizon 2020 and the new framework programme for research and innovation. **Violeta Bulc**, Commissioner for Transport, will address the Members connected to the opinion on a European Strategy on Low-Emission Mobility. **Matti Maasilta**, Estonian Deputy Minister of European Affairs will present the priorities of the new EU Council Presidency, and **Czesław Siekierski** (EPP, PL), Chair of

the AGRI Committee in the European Parliament, is invited to a debate on the post 2020 CAP.

The opinions from the EPP Group Rapporteurs to be adopted in the plenary are presented in more detail on the following pages.



EPP Group meeting: Making Europe fit for the 21st century

MEP **Paulo Rangel**, Vice President of the EPP and Vice President of the EPP Group in the European Parliament responsible for the Future of Europe portfolio, will join the EPP-CoR Members in the Group meeting on July 12th to discuss the Parliament Group's vision for a better Europe: *'Making Europe fit for the 21st century'*.

The position paper on the Future of Europe is based on the three 'non-negotiable' transversal pillars of the EPP Group - democratic rule of law, social market economy, and the four freedoms of Europe - simultaneously opening up the debate on several current European topics.

The Group suggests a European Defence Union with real operational capabilities, developing military capacities for the European Border and Coast Guard and the European Civil Protection Body as well as a new generation of counter-terrorism

measures. It also suggests the conversion of the Council of Ministers into a second parliamentary chamber and that Turkey cannot join the EU, but should remain in close partnership.

The document also expresses the EPP Group's commitment to completing the Economic and Monetary Union, an Innovation Union in the Digital Single Market, seeking fair free trade, and addressing the demographic challenges and territorial inequalities within the EU.

"Nationalist and populist movements are threatening our parliamentary democracies, and our democratic western political system is passing through a legitimacy crisis which we should manage with courage and determination - refusing to give in on our Christian democratic values. Political representation and subsidiarity are two concepts that are completely connected. As I state in the Future

of Europe document, citizens will only accept the European idea if the European Union respects the competences of Member States and of the regions and avoids over-regulating. Cities, regions and the European Union institutions should reinforce their strategic alliances and strengthen their cooperation."

Paulo Rangel MEP



EPP Opinions in the upcoming Plenary Session



Christian Buchmann, Member of the Styrian provincial government, EPP/AT

Smart Regulation for SMEs

ECON-VI/020

The SMEs are the main engines for creating growth and jobs in Europe and the CoR has constantly reminded of the regulatory difficulties facing the SMEs as well as the importance of improving their operational environment.

The rapporteur underlines the persistent need for a coherent, visible and updated European SME policy - oriented towards results and implementation, building upon and strengthening previous initia-

tives, and mainstreaming the “Think Small First” principle across all government levels and policies. The Small Business Act (SBA) needs to be revised and strengthened and cities and regions should have a stronger role in its implementation, giving the example from the CoR European Entrepreneurial Region (EER) scheme.

The opinion highlights focusing the Better Regulation Agenda and REFIT more strongly on SMEs’ needs, participation in

public procurement, SME-friendly VAT and taxation rules, SME access to the Single Market and finance, support from ESIF, innovative approaches to regulation and balancing SME needs with labour, consumer and environmental protection as the key tools to tackle the challenges. The role of clusters in helping small businesses scale up through market testing and analysis, innovation generation, and qualification is also an important element.



Othmar Karas, MEP and President of the SME Intergroup

“SMEs are the backbone of Europe’s economy - hence, as European politicians it is our responsibility to provide for a framework that allows for SMEs to make best use of our internal market.”



Bruno Hranić, Mayor of Vidovec, EPP/HR

Energy Union and clean energy

ENVE-VI/018

The opinion calls for implementing more ambitious targets for energy efficiency and the share of renewable energy at EU level today and suggests they should be raised to 40% by 2030. Furthermore, the document calls for more EU’s support for sub-national cooperation and better recognition of the ambitious policies set up at local levels, highlighting almost 6’000 EU towns and cities which have adopted sustainable energy action plans.

“We use similar approaches and methodologies and are often ahead of the national

level, which could therefore benefit from our acknowledged experience and expertise” – explains Hranić – “Effective coordination between the national level and local and regional authorities in planning, implementing and reporting on energy and climate policies can help avoid unnecessary administrative burdens and meet the requirements of better regulation”.

The document suggests that the European Commission should not only concentrate on cooperation between Member States but also actively support cooperation between sub-national levels of

governance within or between individual Member States.

Furthermore, the opinion asks the European Commission to include a section on multilevel governance in the documentation it addresses to Member State governments with guidelines on reporting on national energy policy and its planning. It also suggests a business-friendly environment achieved through targeted signals, strategies, standards and regulations and with the right support from financial instruments in which public funds are deployed to facilitate private investment.



Angélique Delahaye, MEP and Shadow rapporteur in the EP

“We must respect the commitments made under the Paris Agreements. The establishment of national plans in the Governance of the Energy Union proposal will contribute to this objective and will allow us to collectively achieve the European objectives: in terms of reduction of greenhouse gas, renewables, energy efficiency, interconnection. Member States will have to be bound by their self-set targets and the latter must not be below a certain level. But Member States do not have the same capabilities and it is important that everyone contribute according to its own situation. Indeed it is not by constraint and putting too high objectives that we will get where we want, but more by creating a positive movement.”



Hans Janssen, Mayor of Oisterwijk, EPP/NL

Migration on the Central Mediterranean route - Managing flows, saving lives

CIVEX-VI/023

Systematic EU's engagement with the Libyan authorities is necessary, with a focus on border management, countering irregular migration and addressing the needs of migrants in Libya. The report further calls for aid to Libyan local authorities to comply with international humanitarian and human rights standards.

"The tragedy starts in the countries of origin, not in the sea. EU should contribute to local economic development in the countries along the Central Mediterranean route by supporting

municipalities in their role of local development actors" argues the rapporteur – "We should invest continuous support for capacity building in migration management for Libya's local and national authorities".

Over 180 000 people were detected on the Central Mediterranean route in 2016. Almost 90% of those on the route depart from Libya, where the unstable political and economic situation provides the opportunity for smugglers to expand their activities.

Hans Janssen's opinion on "Migration on the Central Mediterranean Route" recognises an added value of the Nicosia Initiative as a capacity building project in support of Libyan municipalities carried out in partnership with European local and regional authorities. It further calls for expansion of training programmes for the Libyan Coast Guard leading to more firm action to step up the fight against smugglers and traffickers – in coordination with other countries in the region: Tunisia, Algeria and Egypt.



David McAllister,
MEP and AFET
Committee
Chair

"Devising a migration policy that is sustainable in the long term, solidarity based and respectful of human rights, is one of the European Union's most urgent concerns. In order to overcome this challenge, we must work towards increased cooperation amongst Member States and include other local and international actors. Our key priorities must be to save lives and prevent uncontrolled migratory flows."



József Ribányi, Vice President of Tolna Magye Council, EPP/HU

A European Strategy for Low-Emission Mobility

COTER-VI/021

Cycling, walking, public passenger transport solutions, car sharing and pooling should be given preference in urban planning. The opinion encourages local and regional ways to influence consumer preferences and choices, encouraging the use of alternative fuel vehicles. Parking spaces, bus lanes, procurement benefits, "green" registration plates or tariff reductions on

tolls are among the proposed solutions. *'European regions, by playing an active role in establishing smart telecommunications and transport infrastructure, may ensure the efficient use of connected and automated vehicles along the corridors of the TEN-T network which crosses the borders and territories of the Member States'* – argues the rapporteur listing an added value of such

optimisations.

The document is also in favour of harmonisation of transport information available currently from different mobility-related sources. Integrated ticketing also faces obstacles against its wider use as modes of public transport differ in terms of profitability.

'Achieving low-emission mobility is a great potential to streamline links between the energy sector and the transport system, with significant need for new perspectives in urban and transport planning for the future liveable cities.'



Mieczysław Struk, Marshal of the Pomorskie Voivodeship, EPP/PL

Territorial classification and typologies

COTER-VI/024

European regional statistics are an important instrument for targeted policy-making and a useful tool for understanding and quantifying the impact of political decisions in specific territories. Territorial typologies stemming from European statistics play an important role in regional policy as they can contribute to evidence-based policy interventions and more integrated territorial approaches that reflect the diversity of EU regions.

The opinion in general welcomes the European Commission's initiative to amend Regulation (EC) No 1059/2003 as regards

the territorial typologies (Tercet) and praises the proposal for compliance with both principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. However, it calls for addressing the specific situation of territories with particular geographic, economic, social and demographic features, which should be adequately covered within the framework of European regional statistics.

'This would provide them with a chance to support the implementation of public policies targeted at challenges they are facing' – states the rapporteur, who additionally proposed an amendment adding addition-

al territorial typologies related to the territories with specific geographic, economic, social and demographic features, which have already been developed and used.

Struk believes more flexibility should be given to Member States and regional or local authorities with the possibility to submit complementary new typologies based on evidence and experience in the implementation of public policies. *'Should there be a justified need identified by Member States or CoR and confirmed by the European Commission, they should be allowed to propose such changes'* – he argues.



Iskra Mihaylova,
MEP and REGI
Committee
Chair

"The proposal of the Commission on Territorial typologies (Tercet) includes laying down the core definitions and statistical criteria for the different territorial typologies, ensuring their harmonised and transparent application and their use at EU level and in Members States. This is extremely important when planning the future policies and policy responses."

EPP fact-finding mission in Ukraine

Arnoldas Abramavičius participated in the European People's Party Fact-finding mission to Ukraine on May 29-30. EPP-affiliated political parties running the national government since 2014 are targeting to implement the Association and Stability Agreement with the EU. First fruits have already been achieved – since June 11 country was granted a visa-free regime facilitating travelling to Europe.

On the First Day, the EPP delegation started working meeting with Ukrainian President **Petro Poroshenko** on the reform agenda, war and security, as well as tackling corruption. The President emphasised three main objectives: peace and stability in Eastern Ukraine, legislative package on anticorruption and reform of the administrative decentralisation. Mr Abramavičius stressed the importance of fiscal sustainability of the recently amalgamated municipalities (Hromadas).

Later the group had an open and frank talk with Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, **Ivanna Klympush-Tsintsadze**, on EU-Ukraine relations and current government objec-

tives. The decentralisation reform has been among the top reform priorities of Ukraine since 2014 and it is among the most ambitious, cross-sectoral reform projects that should bring direct benefits to the everyday life of Ukrainians.

The second day of the EPP's fact-finding mission to Ukraine included a meeting with mayor of Kyiv **Vitali Klitschko**, leader of Udar-party - a member of the EPP family. "No victory without fight" also summarised the motto for the continued reform efforts necessary for the country on its European path, supported by the EPP.

Final meeting was with Samopomich-party leader **Andriy Sadovyi**, mayor of Lviv, on the role of the national opposition party, the war in the eastern part of the country and ongoing decentralisation reform. The mayor of will participate in the CoR Task Force on Ukraine annual meeting in Khyriv, Lviv region on June 30. Consultative support from CoR to Ukrainian counterparts and the implementation of peer-to peer initiative will benefit the reform process - EU authorities and institutions need to ensure closer cooperation and future accession perspective for Ukraine.



Addressing demographic change in Budapest - EPP-CoR External Meeting

September 8th 2017, the Members of the EPP Group in the European Committee of the Regions will gather to the Hemicycle of the Hungarian Parliament in a Conference on demographic change and regenerating our societies from a regional and local perspective.

Hosted by EPP-CoR Hungarian Delegation chaired by **József Ribányi**, Head of the Delegation, the Conference expects high

level speakers such as national ministers and MEPs, and is a natural follow-up to the work already done by the EPP-CoR in addressing the challenges and opportunities Europe faces with the changing demographics, notably the opinion by Mr. **Juan Vicente Herreira Campo** and the EU-WRC 2016 seminar.

The Conference is centred around two panels: one on the long-term implications

and political proposals on demographic change and the challenges in the EU; the second on encouraging the regeneration of the European society, focusing on how different levels of government can work for the benefit of their citizens and safeguard European living standards.

More information can be found closer to the event from the EPP-CoR website: <http://epp.cor.europa.eu>

Upcoming events

→ 1.9. CoR BUREAU
→ 8.9. Budapest EPP external meeting
→ 18.9. ENVE
→ 19.9. ECON Adoption: Murphy (EPP/IE) - <i>Commission Report on Competition Policy 2016</i>
→ 21.9. CAFA
→ 21.-22.9. CIVEX, FR
→ 26.9. NAT
→ 27.9. COTER
→ 27.-28.9. COTER TRAN-COTER joint meeting and Structured Dialogue with Commissioner Crețu
→ 28.-29.9. SEDEC, RO
→ 1.10. EPP Autumn Academy
→ 9.-12.10. EWRC
→ 9.-11.10. CoR PLENARY SESSION Adoption: D'Attis (EPP/IT) - <i>European Pillar of Social Rights and the social dimension of Europe</i>
→ 10.10. REGI-COTER
→ 11.10. EWRC EPP Workshop 'Cohesion Policy and Europe's Strategic Investments'

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 July 2018

COTER

Europe on the Move: promoting seamless mobility solutions – **Marek Woźniak**
Adoption foreseen February 2018

Europe on the Move: labour aspects of the road transport – **Spyros Spyridon**
Adoption foreseen February 2018

The future of EU finances until 2025 – **Ivan Žagar**
Adoption foreseen February 2018

ECON

European Commission report on Competition Policy 2016 – **Michael Murphy**
Adoption foreseen December 2017

A European strategy for industry: the role and perspective of regional and local authorities – **Heinz Lehmann**
Adoption foreseen February 2018

ENVE

Promoting coexistence with conflict species within the framework of the EU Nature Directives – **Csaba Borboly**
Adoption February 2018

NAT

Sustainable development of the blue economy in the western Mediterranean – **Samuel Azzopardi**
Adoption foreseen 2018

SEDEC

European Pillar of Social Rights and the social dimension of Europe – **Mauro D'Attis**
Adoption foreseen October 2017

Modernising school and higher education – **Csaba Borboly**
Adoption foreseen December 2017

Digital Single Market: Mid-term review – **Mauro D'Attis**
Adoption foreseen January 2018

Interview with Commissioner Violeta Bulc

Commissioner for Transport, Violeta Bulc, attends the July plenary debate connected to the opinion on 'A European Strategy for Low-Emission Mobility' by EPP-CoR Rapporteur József Ribányi. rEPPorter had a chance to pose a few questions to the Commissioner about the role of cities and regions in achieving these goals as well as the future of TEN-T.

How do you see the role and inclusion of local and regional authorities in mobilising the agenda for smart and clean traffic – from development to implementation?

Increasing demand for urban mobility creates situations that are not sustainable, including severe congestion, noise emissions and high levels of CO2 emissions. The transport sector indeed represents a quarter of Europe's greenhouse gas emissions and congestion costs EUR 100 billion annually. We need to drastically reduce emissions and ensure that Europe's urban areas develop along a more sustainable path.

Since the European Commission's first policy proposals in 1995 in the area of urban mobility, a series of initiatives have been launched based upon a "best practice" approach. In 2016, we published the Strategy for low-emission mobility, which sets clear and fair guiding principles for Member States to prepare for the future. While the Strategy strengthens EU's actions on sustainable urban mobility in areas where there is EU added value, we also greatly encourage local and regional authorities to take more decisive and better coordinated action. EU-wide action on urban mobility needs to involve local and regional authorities, as the Commission initiatives cannot reach out to each of the thousands of towns and cities across Europe, nor can they successfully identify and overcome the specific barriers to better urban mobility that

might exist in different parts of the Union. With the vision of engaging cities, we have launched in 2002 the CIVITAS Initiative, which is a network of cities for cities dedicated to cleaner and better transport in the EU. In other words, the success of policies and policy objectives that have been agreed at EU level on smart mobility largely depends on actions taken by regional and local authorities.

Regional and local authorities are crucial in the delivery of the European Strategy for Low-Emission Mobility. What are the instruments of the European Commission to support the fulfillment of strategy's objectives on the ground?

The European Strategy for low-emission mobility aims at increasing the efficiency of transport through the effective use of new technologies and the opportunities offered by digitalisation. It also encourages moving towards zero-emission vehicles and accelerating the deployment of low-emission alternative energy.

Regions and cities will be major actors in delivering and implementing low-emission mobility solutions, close to where the problems are felt most, and ultimately, behavioral choices made by mobility users will determine how successful we will be. This is why the Strategy provides a toolbox for policy makers in Member States, at regional and local level to design their strategies for low-emission mobility. Cities are already promoting modal shift to active travel such as cycling and walking and the use of public transport in order to reduce congestion and pollution. Many of them have also set ambitious targets to contribute to fulfilment of the climate goals of the Paris Agreement and the Commission will support them. It is only through sustained action by all actors that Europe can suc-

cessfully transform its transport system towards low-emission mobility, which is critical to its prosperity and the well-being of its citizens.

What are the key elements and focus areas for the European Commission in developing the second generation of TEN-T networks? What are the plans for widening and better linking the core network system with the comprehensive network e.g. to the periphery/border regions?

The Commission is fully committed to the implementation of the TEN-T core network by 2030 and the comprehensive network by 2050. There is at this stage no plan to revise this transport infrastructure planning as the regulation does not foresee any review before 2023. The co-legislators have indeed wished to provide a long-term and stable vision for developing the Trans-European Network for Transport that will provide greater connectivity and accessibility of all EU regions to the internal market. Naturally, this already benefits periphery/border regions which are integrated in the planning and take part to the implementation of the TEN-T.



EUWRC EPP Workshop

EPP-CoR Workshop during the European Week of Cities and Regions takes place on the afternoon of 11 October and focuses on **Cohesion Policy and Europe's Strategic Investments**.

Cohesion Policy ensures that all Member States, regions and cities – from the less developed to the most developed – are able to benefit from the advantages offered by the European Union. It is one of the strongest and most visible expressions of European investment and solidarity in our cities and regions. A strong Cohesion policy is therefore an integral part of the solution for a

more responsive and democratic Europe.

This workshop aims to demonstrate the need to maintain Cohesion Policy as the EU's main investment policy tool, and will look at its future shape. It will also look at what can be done to bridge the investment gap, and explore how the potential of strategic long-term investments in Europe's regions and cities can be further exploited, notably via synergies with other European investment tools such as the European Fund for Strategic Investments.

Speakers include: **Michael Schneider**, President of the EPP-CoR Group and Rapporteur on "The Future

of Cohesion Policy beyond 2020"; **Markku Markkula**, CoR 1st Vice-President of the European Committee of the Regions and Rapporteur on "Bridging the Investment Gap: How to Tackle the Challenges"; **Olgierd Geblewicz**, President of Westpomerania/PL; **Andrey Novakov**, MEP and Rapporteur on "The right funding mix for Europe's regions: balancing financial instruments and grants in EU cohesion policy"; **Iliyana Tsanova**, Deputy Managing Director of the European Fund for Strategic Investment, European Investment Bank; **Nicola De Michelis** (TBC), Head of Cabinet, Commissioner for Regional Policy.

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