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**82nd EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE BUREAU
OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

- 21 OCTOBER 2004 -

ITEM 4

IMPACT REPORT ON THE WORK OF THE CoR

Submitted by the secretary-general

FOR DISCUSSION

MEMO FOR CoR BUREAU MEMBERS

**82nd EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE BUREAU
OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

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"There are three groups of politicians: those who watch what happens, those who wonder what happens and those who make things happen."

Dermot Ahern, Irish Minister for Telecommunication at the CoR Conference on 5/6 April 2004

1. Introduction

This report illustrates the activities of the Committee of the Regions and its impact in the year 2003. It discusses the goals and achievements of the CoR within the various policy fields and assesses its impact in the light of its inter-institutional position.

The presentation of an impact assessment is a statutory duty of the Bureau described in rule 35 a) as follows:

"an impact assessment shall, on referral by the Bureau, be presented to the Plenary Assembly by the President annually and at the end of each term;"¹

Since the function of the Committee as a consultative body comprises as major stakeholders the European Institutions, such as the European Commission, European Parliament and the Council, this report could be equally of interest for these institutions.

The report is based on the documentation of the CoR such as opinions, working programmes and reports, general documents of the European Commission, the Council and the European Parliament, the reports of the European Commission on the action taken on the CoR opinions and interviews within the administration.

The European Integration is characterised by two differing political developments: Centralization and Decentralization. The globalisation process, which is reflected in the EU policy to create one big European internal market, exerts pressure to centralize and harmonize certain activities on a European level. At the same time, a process of decentralization is taking place in some member states to strengthen the regional and local level and to allow locally adapted answers to increased international competition. As a response to these developments different concepts of a more liberal market-oriented policy or a more social oriented policy have been discussed at a national and at a European level and have also influenced the work of the European Convention, which was the major European political event in 2003 together with the signing of the accession treaties.

Otherwise 2003 was in many aspects a difficult year. The European economy remained stuck in a low growth trap, undermining insofar the credibility of the Lisbon process and of the stability and growth

¹ CdR 1/2004

pact. In addition, the letter of the six net contributors underlining the limits of the financial solidarity already indicates future political conflicts which might reduce further public support for the EU.

Under this difficult circumstances the Committee of the Regions has succeeded throughout the process of the Convention in various ways to strengthen its institutional function and also to underline the importance of the sub-national level. It has - through the active participation in the Convention with its representatives – been able to represent the concerns of the local and regional level. Moreover, the discussion process has brought the stakeholders at regional and local level closer together and enforced the role of the CoR to act as representative of the local and regional authorities in Europe.

When the work on the European Convention began, the Open Method of Coordination had not been one of the central issues, nor had its relationship with the new definition of the subsidiarity principle and the role of the local and regional perspective been clear².

In the course of the discussions it became obvious that their concise definition and their expected implementation would carry important consequences for the role of the CoR in all policy areas.

A regular and methodologically sound impact assessment is one of the instruments to be developed to increase the CoR's role and to live up to its function as an advocate of regional and local perspectives on the supranational policy-making level.

There have been previous impact reports in the history of the CoR focusing on its activities. This report, however, goes further in two aspects:

- It is placing a higher emphasis on the positioning of the CoR within the inter-institutional setting and on the policy context.
- It is proposing to develop a methodology and an assessment procedure of EU legislative proposals together with the European Commission and of the CoR's activities as requested by previous reports³. A methodologically focussed approach is also in line with the basic idea of the administrative reform seeking to develop a better reporting for the coming years to ensure a better resource allocation and use.

The goal of an impact assessment is to help the CoR and especially its bureau to set political priorities and to develop coherent policy actions.

This report illustrates the political priorities of the CoR in 2003 in the inter-institutional context (Chapter 2) and discusses then in more detail the developments in the priority areas and the CoR's main activities and impact therein (Chapter 3). It makes a distinction between the thematic areas treated in the various commissions (Subchapter 3.1 to 3.6) and the horizontal aims of inter-institutional

² For a more detailed discussion see the subchapter on the European Convention.

³ CdR 134/2003 p 7

dialogue on one hand (Subchapter 3.7) and communication and transparency activities on the other hand (Subchapter 3.8).

This report tries to present some preliminary conclusions in the form of a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) Analysis.

2. **The political priorities of the CoR in the reporting period**

The debate on the future of the EU and more specifically the institutional role of the Committee of the Regions in line with its place as guardian of subsidiarity, proportionality and proximity was the horizontal theme in all policy areas. The issue of local and regional authorities received its adequate place on the agenda of the Convention, the constitutional process had a considerable importance for the development of all political priorities of the CoR. Furthermore, the priority setting was greatly influenced by the Commission's new thematic and strategic approach in its annual work plan.

The Commission had outlined in its *Annual Policy Strategy for 2003*⁴ and its *Legislative and Work Programme for 2003*⁵ to focus on three political priorities:

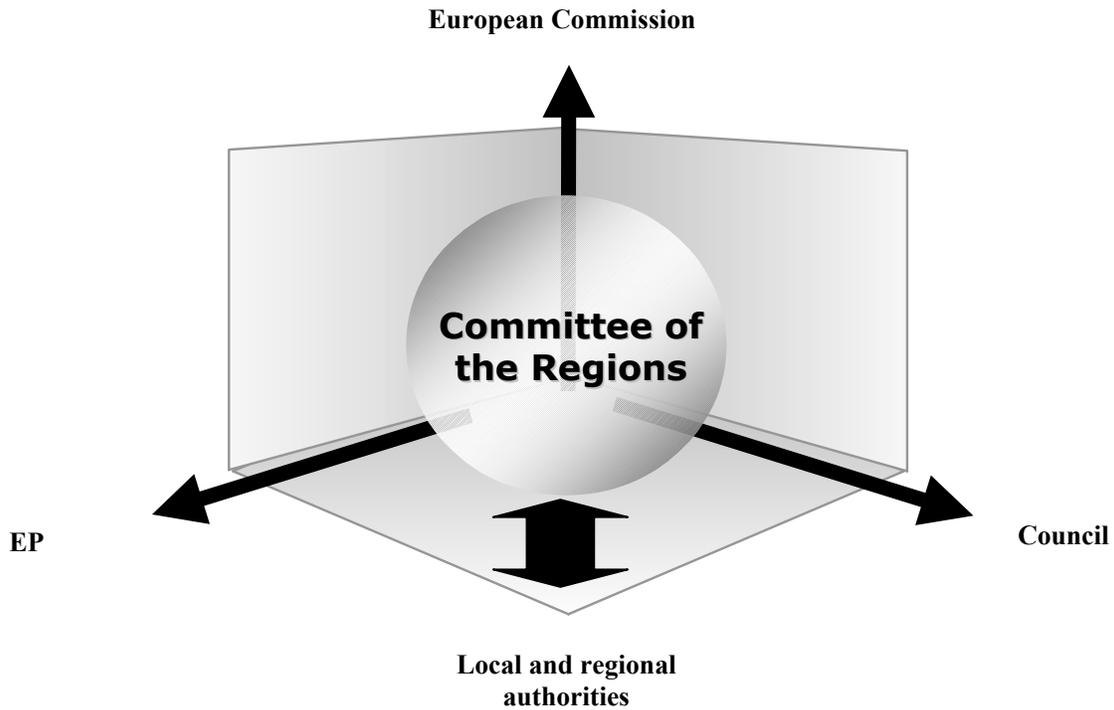
- an enlarged Europe;
- stability and security; and
- a sustainable and inclusive economy.

The CoR reacted positively to this prioritisation; however, it expressed concern on its non-involvement in the inter-institutional dialogue between Commission, Council and Parliament in the development of the planning.

⁴ SEC(2002)217 of 27 February 2002

⁵ COM(2002) 590 final

Figure 1: The consultative function of the CoR



Source: Committee of the Regions

In its main political planning documents, the *Policy Strategy 2003*⁶ and the *Resolution of the CoR on the European Commission's work programme*⁷, the CoR welcomed the focus on the qualitative dimension of the **enlargement** process, emphasized, however, the need to further develop the notion of European citizenship, and the promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity in the process.

It urged the Commission and the governments of the Acceding countries to step up considerably the consultation of, and information to local and regional authorities during the pre-accession stage and to earmark the necessary means for this process. A successful accession would depend largely on the degree of preparedness of local and regional authorities. The CoR perceived a year before the enlargement still a very strong need for capacity building.

Stability and security was another pillar of the CoR's work where it largely coincided with the prioritisation of the Commission and where it welcomed, in particular, the wider perspective of the Commission to the goal of a European area of prosperity, peace and stability. Additionally to the measures proposed by the Commission - to develop extensive border management, intensify

⁶ R/CdR 232/2002 item 7

⁷ Resolution of the Committee of the Regions of 13 February 2003 on The European Commission's Work Programme and the Committee of the Regions' priorities for 2003 CdR 6/2003 fin

partnerships with neighbouring countries in Europe outside the EU and to strengthen the Common Foreign and Security Policy - the CoR reiterated its views that policies to achieve economic and social cohesion, the spreading of education and culture, fair trade and sustainable development contribute equally to a safe living environment.

Local and regional authorities are amongst the primary actors with regard to ensuring stability and security, the new emphasis on these priority fields had therefore important consequences for local and regional authorities.

The economic prospects for the EU in 2003 were marked by a lower growth than earlier expected, due to the increased tensions in the Middle East and Iraq and the development of the oil prices, decreasing consumer and investors' confidence and a strong volatility in financial markets. In an environment of increasing uncertainties an economic recovery was expected to take more time. Accelerated implementation of the Lisbon strategy was therefore regarded as crucial to be able to cope with the economic slow-down and the accession of new Member States and to foster the aim of a **sustainable and inclusive economy**.

The aims of the Lisbon strategy had been formulated in March 2000 as

- preparing the transition to a knowledge-based economy and society by better policies for the information society and R&D (Research and Development), as well as by stepping up the process of structural reform for competitiveness and innovation and by completing the internal market;
- modernising the European social model, investing in people and combating social exclusion;
- sustaining the healthy economic outlook and favourable growth prospects by applying an appropriate macro-economic policy mix.

A reinforcement of the Lisbon process to meet the objectives by 2010 was requested by the CoR emphasizing, however, that the requisite structural reforms must not be detrimental to social cohesion, and must therefore be accompanied by major economic and social investment, and in education.

The role of the Stability and Growth Pact to maintain stability-oriented macro-economic policies was acknowledged by the CoR, nevertheless, it perceived a need to include more specific criteria to take account of public investment, in particular in infrastructure and schemes for social and employment integration. Additionally, the relation between monetary and budgetary policy deserved more attention and was to be studied according to the CoR's political priorities from the sub-national perspective as well, given that local and regional authorities are responsible for a large part of public spending.

The EU, the Member States and the local and regional authorities should develop territorial employment pacts, improve the legal framework for private enterprise, especially for SMEs and introduce the necessary reforms of the social security systems in order to create the right conditions for social stability, a sound economy and public welfare.

The CoR took a particular interest in the forthcoming proposals (Green Paper) of the Commission regarding the Services of General Interest, pointing out the importance of equal access to these services in the day-to-day lives of citizens and in this context the need to clarify state aid rules and to define commercial and non-commercial services.

The concept of **territorial cohesion** is regarded by the CoR as a complement of economic and social cohesion. Consequently and additionally to its request to take this concept into account in the Treaty, the CoR attached great importance to the task of developing an integrated territorial strategy within the framework of the future structural policy and to regional cooperation as an integration factor and genuine Community value added to regional policy.

The natural role of the CoR as a stakeholder in the regional policies is widely acknowledged.

The CoR planned to play an important role in the debate on defining a new cohesion policy and the priority setting for the future. It furthermore firmly expressed the need for simplification, higher effectiveness and decentralisation of the Structural Funds.

3. **Developments in the priority areas and activities of the CoR**

This chapter is reporting on the main issues and outcomes in the different commissions of the CoR (subchapter 3.1 to 3.6) and is likewise addressing in its second part the horizontal activity axes of inter-institutional relations and communication.

3.1 **The European Convention**

2003 was an important year for the process of European unification with the completion of work on the European Convention. Commissioned by the Laeken European Council in December 2001 to examine crucial questions relating to the further development of the EU and to seek out different possible responses for a new Intergovernmental Conference, the European Convention finished its work on 10 July 2003 with the signing of a full draft constitution which was submitted to the EU presidency. In line with the mandate of the heads of state and government, the presidency-in-office convened the IGC on 4 October 2003 in order to complete the EU reform process.

The Convention method allowed local democratic representatives to participate closely in the first phase of the EU reform process – a unique political venture in the entire history of European integration, and a precedent that should be placed on a formalised footing in the future. In fact, the six CoR representatives to the European Convention had an active input into the drafting of the draft constitution over a 16 month period. In accordance with the remit assigned to them by the Bureau, the six CoR members of the Convention made numerous written submissions on important issues. They

forwarded relevant CoR opinions⁸ and regularly spoke at plenary sessions to give the viewpoint of local and regional authorities.

Moreover, thanks to institutional and political cooperation with the European Parliament, a debate was held in the Convention on the role of local and regional authorities in the European integration process.

Their presence within the Convention has certainly established the local and regional dimension in the debate on the future of the Union. Two plenary sessions of the Convention (25 June 2002 and 7 February 2003) were also given over to this topic.

Furthermore, a contact group "Regions and local authorities", chaired first by **Ms A. De Palacio**, then by **Mr J.L. Dehaene**, met several times at key points in the Convention's work.

Although the organisation of debates in the plenary session did not provide full scope for statements by CoR members, they made a positive contribution to the European Convention's work and had particular impact in:

- strengthening the dialogue with all Union institutions represented in the Convention as well as the CLRAE;
- enhancing the presence of CoR members in the activities of European political parties;
- developing cooperation and dialogue with the European associations representing local and regional authorities;
- expanding the debate on the future of the Union within all CoR bodies: plenary session, Bureau and the Commission for Constitutional Affairs and European Governance;
- widening of the CoR's communication policy by adding a specific page to the website open to local and regional authorities and their assemblies and representative organisations.

In conclusion, the members of the CoR at the Convention undoubtedly strengthened its image as a political protagonist on the European stage and its status as the representative of local and regional authorities within the Union. This prompted CoR representatives to urge in a specific contribution that this method should be made permanent in the procedure for revising the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe by providing for the full participation of CoR representatives.

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Opinion on *towards a constitution for European citizens* (CdR 114/2002 fin)
Opinion on *the simplification of the Union's instruments* (CdR 263/2002 fin)
Opinion on *a better division and definition of powers in the European Union* (CdR 119/2002 fin)
Opinion on *more democracy, transparency and efficiency in the European Union* (CdR 120/2002 fin)
Resolution in preparation for the *Copenhagen European Council* (CdR 123/2002 fin)
Opinion on *the role of the regional and local authorities in European integration* (CdR 237/2002 fin)

3.1.1 The local and regional dimension

As for the evaluation of the proposals of the Convention, it should be stressed that a number of the institutional and political innovations in the draft Constitution have been recommended by the Committee of the Regions for several years.

In view of the significance of the questions being discussed, the Convention's deliberations took greater account of the **local and regional dimension** than expected. The draft Constitution recognises the role of local and regional authorities in the Union, particularly:

- the importance attached to values and fundamental rights, and to respect for local and regional self-government and for cultural and linguistic diversity, (Articles 3, 5 and the Preamble of the Charter of Fundamental Rights);
- the inclusion of territorial cohesion among the objectives of the Union (Article 3);
- the acknowledgement of the importance of grassroots democracy in the Union, (Article 45);
- the new definition of the principle of subsidiarity, (Article 9(3));
- consideration of the effects of Community legislation on local and regional authorities (protocol on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality);
- recognition of the principle of consultation, and consequently, closer cooperation between local and regional authorities in drawing up, implementing and evaluating Community policies (protocol on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality);
- the possibility for regional parliaments with legislative powers to be involved in the early warning process of ex-ante monitoring of the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality (protocol on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality);
- the possibility of a mandatory consultation of the CoR by the European Parliament (Article III-294)
- recognition of the special status of the outermost regions (Article III-330).

For the CoR and local and regional authorities, the most significant progress is the draft protocol on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality which establishes a politico-judicial control measure taking account of the local and regional effects of Community legislation. Furthermore, this protocol establishes the principle of consultation and includes the only specific reference to regions with legislative powers in the draft constitution.

After the European Convention had completed its work, the CoR sought to consolidate its experience within the IGC and took several relevant initiatives by adopting both a resolution on the Convention's work⁹ and an own-initiative opinion on these proposals to the IGC¹⁰.

Hearing on the EU reform process

Moreover, the CoR sought to decentralise the debate on the future of the Union by organising, on 24 November 2003 as part of a CONST meeting in Brussels, a hearing on the EU reform process for all the national and regional associations representing local and regional authorities. Representatives of European associations of local and regional authorities (CPMR, CEMR, Eurocities, REG LEG) took part in this hearing as well as national associations (Germany, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Italy, Netherlands) and regional offices from Spain, France, Italy, the UK and Sweden. The contributions to this hearing showed a converging approach which supported the expectations of the CoR for the European Convention and the expectations for the IGC.

The CoR also set up a monitoring group responsible for following up the work of the IGC and – under the auspices of its Commission for Constitutional Affairs and European Governance - has maintained a permanent link with the various Council presidencies in order to promote its requests as effectively as possible. The IGC was suspended in December 2003, and it is difficult to assess the impact of the CoR's political involvement. Nevertheless, as part of its recognised contribution to the European Convention, the Committee called on the IGC to confirm the Convention proposals enshrining local and regional powers in the new constitution.

3.1.2 The Convention and the implementation of new forms of governance

The draft Constitution for Europe produced by the Convention on the Future of Europe takes up many of the issues mentioned in the White Paper on European Governance. In fact, since 2000, the debates on the reform of European governance – as a political priority of the European Commission - have always been presented as ways of boosting the EU's legitimacy and effectiveness without changing the Treaty. Thus, many issues raised during the public debate that preceded the drafting of the European Commission's White Paper on European Governance – and issues identified by the Commission in the White Paper itself – provided broad pointers both for the Laeken Declaration and several working groups of the Convention on the future of Europe.

⁹ Resolution on *the Recommendations of the European Convention* (CdR 198/2003 fin)

¹⁰ Opinion on *the CoR proposals for the Intergovernmental Conference* (CdR 169/2003 fin)

Follow-up to the White Paper on European Governance

The inclusion – thanks to CoR efforts – of the EU’s regional and local dimension in the debate on European governance by which the European Commission sought to involve regions and towns more effectively in drawing up EU policies and to put in place a permanent dialogue with regional and local authorities, was given a boost in 2003 with the Communication from the Commission on the follow-up of the White Paper on European Governance and a series of Commission communications. These set in motion a large number of activities provided for in the White Paper, including those relating to the culture of consultation, target-based tripartite contracts and the implementation of the “Better Lawmaking” action plan.

In this context, it should be stressed that on 17 October 2003 in Rome – under the auspices of the Italian presidency of the Council of Ministers, and for the first time in EU history – 25 ministers from the EU Member States and candidate countries signed a joint document calling for an enhanced role for regions and towns within the European integration process. The White Paper on European Governance was cited a number of times as a political reference.

Against the backdrop of the European reform process and the emergence of new forms of governance, the CoR undoubtedly emerges from 2003 stronger in its role as EU representative of local and regional authorities and as mediator and facilitator with national and European associations that represent local and regional government.

The CoR’s function in dialogue between the Commission and associations

For several years the CoR has fostered close relations with national and European associations that represent local and regional government. Its special relationship has borne fruit, particularly in the successful consultation process in the European Convention on the future of the EU where the CoR was seen as a key consultative partner with these associations. The Commission Communication of 19 December 2003 on “dialogue with associations of regional and local authorities on the formulation of European Union policy” (COM(2003) 811 final) acknowledges the importance of the CoR’s role in relations with these associations, and suggests that the CoR take a facilitator role in this dialogue.

To sum up, the work done and statements made by the CoR in the institutional debate provide a solid basis for involvement of both the Committee and its members in the national and regional debate for the ratification of the constitution.

3.2 Enlargement and Europe in the world

3.2.1 Enlargement

The completion of the enlargement process has been one of the most important issues for the CoR, being a horizontal priority and also a topical one in the work of the respective commission. The entry treaties for the ten new members were signed in April 2003 after a long process of preparation and

negotiation. This moment also marked the end of a long process in the work of the CoR. Since 1997 enlargement has been viewed as an event which affects the debate about the future nature and structure of Europe. On 13 May 1998, the CoR Bureau decided to formalise the informal dialogue that had already been launched with the candidate countries, by setting up an *ad hoc* Bureau group called the CoR/CEEC-Cyprus Liaison Group. At this group's instigation a series of conferences and seminars were organised by the CoR in all the candidate countries. The CoR's relations with local and regional authorities in candidate countries were put on an even more formal footing when, in 2001, at their request and following the examples of the EP and the EESC, a decision by the Council of Ministers launched the establishment of joint consultative committees (JCCs), bodies comprising CoR members (8 members) and elected local and/or regional representatives from the candidate countries seeking to involve themselves in the European decision-making process and to familiarise themselves with EU and CoR practices. Similar committees have been set up with Poland, the Czech Republic and Cyprus, but their work was discontinued once the observer scheme became operative in July 2003. A new joint consultative committee has been set up with Bulgaria and a further one with Romania will also be established very soon.

The aim of the CoR's consultative activities has been to closely monitor the stage reached in the negotiations, giving members an opportunity to express an opinion on the progress made by countries on their path to accession and in incorporating the *acquis* into their legislation, while also proposing an exchange of experience and aid to new countries. Opinions have been drawn up on topical issues relating to different aspects of enlargement and tackling issues such as a financial framework of the negotiations, the administrative and judicial capacity of the new countries and regular reports on each of the candidate countries, as well as on the European Commission's communication strategy.

All these subjects are seen from the perspective of European local and regional authorities (one of the most important opinions in this area is that on the Report of the European Commission on the progress towards accession by each of the candidate countries)¹¹. In the opinion the CoR encouraged the accession countries to boost their efforts in order to comply as far as possible with the *acquis communautaire* when they join so as to be able to benefit from all the advantages of accession. In the opinion, and also in the recommendations adopted within the JCCs, the CoR noted the need for restructuring the administrative departments of candidate countries' local and regional authorities, and called for transparency between national and regional/local levels, with circulation of information and opportunities for exchange of experience. In addition to its consultative activities and hosting JCCs, the CoR also established contacts with the local and regional authorities in the candidate countries through various conferences and seminars.

¹¹ CdR 325/2002 on the communications *Towards the enlarged Union - Strategy Paper and Report of the European Commission on the progress towards accession by each of the candidates* COM(2002) 700 final and on *Report from the Commission to the Council: Explaining Europe's Enlargement* COM(2002) 281 final.

The devolution agenda: Regions and cities matter

A conference organised jointly by the CoR and the CLRAE on the theme *The devolution agenda: Regions and cities matter* took place on 26 November 2003 in Brussels. It addressed devolution, which remains a key issue in the development of regional and local structures in all the accession and candidate countries. The debate, which was attended by over one hundred participants, provided an opportunity – through the Council of Europe’s reports – to take stock of the progress and pitfalls of devolution in many EU countries and to draw conclusions on the changing political landscape and on the acknowledgement of the role of regional and local entities in the devolution process.

As far as Turkey is concerned, a CoR conference should have taken place in Turkey at the end of 2003, but it had to be postponed as a result of the terrorist attacks in Istanbul. All being well, it will take place in October 2004. The CoR’s message to Turkey’s local and regional authorities is one of partnership and support. In Turkey, the process of devolving powers towards the regional and local level is still at its early stages and there remains a lot to be done, even before contemplating launching negotiations for Turkey’s accession to the EU. The earlier the Turkish local and regional authorities take part in the networks of local and regional authorities of the current Member States, the better they will know how the EU works, and the advantages and responsibilities it represents for them. As a result, local and regional authorities will be more able to defend and establish their position as partners in future accession negotiations.

Developing the capacity of regional and local players within a period of political and economic transition is a long-term process which requires assistance in terms of information, consultation and appropriate training programmes. It is therefore difficult to be able to specifically evaluate the impact of the opinions adopted in the CoR Commission for External Relations, or the JCC recommendations. However, through a preliminary evaluation, we can confirm the usefulness of contacts between CoR elected representatives and their counterparts in the candidate countries, and the usefulness of exchanging experience.

3.2.2 The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and neighbourhood policy

In 2003 the European Commission wanted to set out a new framework for relations over the coming decade with Russia, the western NIS and the southern Mediterranean countries which do not at present have any prospect of EU membership, but which currently share a border with the Union. Over the next ten years, the Commission would like the EU to work in partnership to develop an area of prosperity and good neighbourliness – a "circle of friends" – in which the EU enjoys close and peaceful relations going beyond co-operation to involve a significant measure of economic and political integration. This will bring enormous gains to all involved in terms of increased stability, security and well-being. At a more practical level the Commission therefore suggests that neighbouring countries should be offered the prospect of a stake in the EU's single market, tying it to the pursuit of integration and liberalisation so as to promote the free movement of people, goods, services and capital (the four freedoms). Differences between the eastern and southern neighbours,

both in terms of progress made in achieving reform and their differing hopes and aspirations when it comes to EU membership, should be taken into account in the new neighbourhood policy.

In its document on its political priorities, the CoR fully endorsed the Commission's neighbourhood policy and the stability factor on which it is based, but it also noted that if the Wider Europe policy is to be a success, it is absolutely necessary to distinguish two distinct lines of action - one for the Mediterranean and the other for Russia and the NIS. It recommended that the Commission involve the local and regional authorities of the EU-25 in shaping the new "circle of friends" policy.

In 1999 the European Union adopted a long-term approach to the development of the countries in the Western Balkans, the stabilisation and association process (SAP), to support the transition to democracy underway in these countries.

The role of the European Union's local and regional authorities in the democratic consolidation process in the Western Balkans – Own-initiative opinion¹²

The CoR emphasised the active involvement of local and regional authorities to enable a favourable climate for economic recovery and political stability safeguarding the values of democracy, the rule of law and protection of minorities. Association and stabilization agreements drawn up with the Balkan countries need strong backing from Europe's regional and local authorities, as the development of the area must be bolstered by both dialogue and multilateral and bilateral cooperation. It recommended that the support instruments for the Stabilization and Association process, such as the CARDS programme must include action focusing on developing democracy through cooperation between sub-national authorities. The Commission included the Opinion of the CoR in the input into the strategic analysis process for the strategic programming for the Western Balkans for the period 2005-2006. In its Communication on a new neighbourhood instrument¹³ the Commission proposed the introduction of the Neighbourhood Programmes, based on the Interreg and Phare CBC's existing external border programmes, involving relevant stakeholders on both sides of the border. CARDS is allocating an amount of €45 million for the period 2004-2006, in addition to €910 million allocated to Interreg, Phare, Tacis and Meda. In the second phase, after 2006, it proposes introducing a new neighbourhood instrument combining cross-border and regional cooperation measures in the areas around the external borders. This instrument should be logically linked to and coherent with the various external policy agendas and processes and take account of the different regional priorities already established.

In addition to its opinions on the Balkans and the Northern dimension, two other important opinions should be mentioned: (1) the opinion on the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament: Wider Europe - Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours and (2) the outlook opinion on the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and local and regional authorities: the need for coordination and a specific instrument for decentralised cooperation.

¹² CdR 101/2003 fin

¹³ COM(2003) 393 final

In the opinion on neighbourhood, the CoR pledged to support the European Commission's initiative to strengthen cooperation with neighbouring countries. However it also called for a regional perspective to be included in the plans, and highlighted future implications of the proposal for local and regional authorities, particularly in border areas, so as to involve them more closely in the decision-making process of this new policy. It also felt strongly that focusing narrowly on extending the internal market or on security aspects would not of itself secure full cooperation between countries.

Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and local and regional authorities: the need for coordination and a specific instrument for decentralised cooperation – outlook opinion¹⁴

Commissioner De Palacio invited the CoR to draw up an outlook opinion assessing the progress made in the Barcelona Process, analysing the functioning of the association agreements in force with the Mediterranean partner countries and to provide insights, drawn from the experience of the CoR, on the development of cooperation between EU regions and regions of the southern Mediterranean countries or between the southern Mediterranean regions themselves. The opinion stressed the current fragmentation and dispersal of programmes and measures in the field of decentralised cooperation, and pressed the case for MEDA and INTERREG to be coordinated as rapidly as possible, by integrating the neighbourhood strategy into the Commission's new guidelines, or by launching a specific Community Initiative Programme to maintain, develop and facilitate dialogue between cultures in the Mediterranean basin. The CoR also asked the Commission to set up a forum designed to represent – as institutions involved in the Barcelona process – sub-national decentralised authorities (municipal, provincial and regional) in the Member States and in partner countries in the Mediterranean basin. This body should devote itself to discussing operational problems and actively contributing to the exchange of ideas on decentralised cooperation.

In the context of Mediterranean policy, it is worth mentioning the Euro-Mediterranean Conference held in Livorno (Italy) on 31 October 2003, which adopted the important conclusions that were later presented to the Euro-Mediterranean ministerial meeting in Naples on 2 and 3 December 2003. The most important conclusion of this conference was a call to recognise the role of the local and regional authorities in the Euro-Mediterranean process and to involve them more closely in achieving an area of freedom, stability and prosperity in the Mediterranean regions.

As for the opinion on neighbourhood, the Commission – in its follow-up to the CoR's opinion – fully shares the CoR's viewpoint, that the ENP should not focus solely on internal market and security issues, but should also concentrate on economic development and cultural cooperation. The Commission – fully aware of the importance of intercultural dialogue – is ready to launch initiatives and measures along the lines proposed by the CoR. The importance of ensuring the fullest possible involvement of civil society and local and regional authorities is also crucial to the Commission's philosophy. In order to meet the CoR's requests, the Commission is prepared to consider additional support for the local and regional authorities in the partner countries.

¹⁴ CdR 327/2003 fin

On Euro-Mediterranean policy, it has not yet been possible either for the Council or the Commission to consider the request addressed to the Naples Council in December 2003 to set up a forum designed to represent – as institutions involved in the Barcelona process – sub-national decentralised authorities (municipal, provincial and regional) in the Member States and in the partner countries in the Mediterranean basin.

3.3 The future of regional policy

Regional policy is one of the areas where the expectations of a very concrete impact of the CoR activities are very high. Consequently, its objectives feature prominently in the political priorities of the institution and the role of the CoR as a legitimate representation of the local and regional authorities.

The activities in 2003 were focused on two principal proposals from the European Commission: Firstly, the beginning of the debate of the reform of cohesion policy and secondly, the revision of the general guidelines for the development of the Transeuropean Networks of Transport, the first global revision since 1994 when the guidelines were adopted by the Essen European Summit. In spite of the engagements made by the Member States at the Essen Council in December 1994 to complete the priority projects by the end of 2010, by the end of 2003, only 3 of these projects had been completed. Less than a quarter of the funding for the cross border sections of these projects had been found.

3.3.1 Cohesion policy

The year 2003 was crucial for the debate on the reform and adaptation of the Cohesion policy. This reform had to take into account the accession of 10 new Member States. The key yardstick for the Committee's assessment continued to be the objective set out in Article 158 of the EC Treaty, i.e. strengthening economic and social cohesion in order to promote the overall harmonious development of the Community. Nevertheless, major disparities remain across the Union, between Member States, between regions and inside regions. These wide disparities act as a drag on the competitiveness of the Union as a whole. The forthcoming enlargement was expected to significantly exacerbate territorial imbalances within the EU: thus, the general case for maintaining and improving a strong European cohesion policy was reinforced.

The CoR played a major role in the reform discussion and supported it with the organisation of several events: A major international conference in Leipzig, an external meeting of the Commission COTER in Bari and the organisation of a forum on the future of the cohesion policy in Brussels.

3.3.1.1 Economic and social cohesion

The European Commission published the second progress report on economic and social cohesion in January 2003, it was supposed to be a further step towards drawing up proposals for the shape of European cohesion policy post 2006 in the context of EU enlargement. The Report provided up-to-date data on socio-economic trends in both the present Member States and regions and the accession

countries. It became clear from the figures that regional and structural policy had to continue to be a joint task for Member States, local and regional authorities and the European Union and that the re-nationalisation of this policy should therefore be rejected, as was suggested in the European Commission's second progress report.

It was also deemed essential that European regional policy be continued for less developed regions and that a new regional policy be established for other regions. Following the work done in 2002 for the Opinion on the Communication of the European Commission «First progress report on economic and social cohesion» (CdR 101/2002 fin), the COTER Commission adopted an Opinion on the Communication of the European Commission “Second progress report on economic and social cohesion” (CdR 391/2002). The CoR requested that regional and local communities should be extensively involved in defining and implementing cohesion policy and that sectoral policies with a significant territorial impact (agriculture, competition, transport, research and innovation, employment and training) should be coordinated. Furthermore, it emphasised that cohesion policy in the new Member States should not be funded solely at the expense of current support areas which are not able to cope with structural change without outside assistance. The recommendations made by the CoR were favourably received by the Commission and had a considerable impact on the preparation of the third progress report on cohesion.

In the 3rd Cohesion Report, adopted in February 2004, the Commission outlined its proposals for a significant reform of cohesion policy for the next programming period (2007-2013) in order to address the major cohesion challenges facing the enlarged Union.

Furthermore, the Commission proposed in its multi-annual budget proposals for the seven-year period commencing in January 2007, also adopted in February 2004, to provide an amount of €336.29 billion for cohesion policy, representing 0.41% of the EU's GNP. The Commission has indicated that it believes this level of resources is needed for an effective and credible cohesion policy, including outside the lagging regions. It has also proposed enhanced provision for actions in the field of Territorial Cooperation, with 4% of the cohesion budget. The Commission sees the Regional Competitiveness and Employment and the Territorial Cooperation strands as providing important instruments contributing to the implementation of territorial cohesion outside the Convergence regions.

3.3.1.2 Territorial cohesion

Territorial disparities threatening the harmonic development of the European Union may be found at various levels (European level¹⁵, national level¹⁶, regional level¹⁷, urban areas¹⁸, islands, sparsely populated and certain mountain areas). A feature of territorial cohesion is the cumulative character of its varied manifestations. For example, the terrain of island regions and archipelagos is often mountainous, while sparsely populated territories are typically very remote and exhibit severe problems of integration linked to border locations. Even if distance and travel costs are today less constraining than formerly for some types of economic activity, peripheral regions may fail to benefit because of poor utilisation of ICTs, inadequate networks linking their enterprises to global markets, or aspects of social capital, governance or institutional structure that reinforce isolation.

The European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP), originally adopted by the Ministers for Spatial Planning at the Potsdam Council 1999, is a suitable policy framework for the sectoral policies that have spatial impacts and promotes polycentric urban development, a new relationship between urban and rural areas, equal access for all regions to infrastructure and know-how, and prudent management of natural and cultural heritage.

As a policy objective, territorial cohesion aims to contribute to the harmonious and balanced development of the Union by reducing economic and social disparities, by preventing territorial imbalances from emerging and by making sectoral policies that have a spatial impact more coherent with regional policy. Territorial cohesion also aims to improve territorial integration and encourage cooperation between regions.

Territorial cohesion – a key concept for the CoR promoted in a multi-level approach

The CoR has made the promotion of the concept of territorial cohesion one of its key strategic goals in the debate of the new cohesion policy. It chose a multi-level approach: A widely positively received research study on “Territorial cohesion in Europe” (CdR 388/2002 fin) formed the theoretical and empirical basis. It was followed by an own-initiative opinion. A crucial element in the strategy was the **conference on the future of cohesion policy in Leipzig**, organised by the Committee of the Regions together with the major European associations of local and regional authorities (AEBR, AER, CEMR, CPMRE and Eurocities) which brought together 500 representatives of cities and regions from across

¹⁵ A “pentagon” of high economic activity covers 18% of the EU 15 land area while accounting for 41% of population, 48% of GDP and 75% of expenditure on R&D.

¹⁶ On a national level a persistence of pronounced imbalances, in terms of economic development, between the main metropolitan areas and other zones can be observed.

¹⁷ On a regional level there is a persistence or a widening of territorial disparities beyond those measured by GDP and unemployment observable. Economic development is accompanied by growing congestion and pollution and the persistence of social exclusion in the main urban areas, whereas the economies of rural areas suffering from inadequate economic links with neighbouring small and medium-sized towns are often weakening as a result.

¹⁸ Pockets of poverty and social exclusion in areas with often only limited availability of essential services (also a feature of some regions).

the present and future EU Member States. Participants also included the European Regional Affairs Commissioner Michel Barnier, the German Minister of Economics and Labour, Wolfgang Clement and the Polish Minister of Economics, Jerzy Hausner, as well as the President of the German Bundesrat, Wolfgang Böhmer. A further step with a positive impact **was the successful request to include the concept of territorial cohesion in the Draft Constitutional Treaty.**

The experience with natural disasters in the summer of 2002 and 2003 provoked a political debate on the politically adequate responses on a European level.

Natural disasters and structural funds

The own initiative Opinion on Management and consequences of natural disasters: the role of European structural policy¹⁹ identified three areas where activity at EU level was required: prevention, immediate remedial action and longer-term remediation/compensation. It requested the establishment of a community initiative in the field of civil protection as part of the new Structural Funds system. The opinion anticipated the Commission Communication on cooperation and coordination in civil protection which was adopted in May 2004 where the Commission specified three areas of action which are also included in the multi-annual budget proposals: better sharing of information on available resources; more training of intervention teams and increased financing to assist with transportation costs and other early costs.

The preparation of the opinion has been supported by a seminar on the use of the structural funds for natural disasters in Umbria in May 2003. The reflections in the opinion contributed to the implications of the new legal basis included in the Draft Constitutional Treaty, which reinforces the case for cooperation between Member States in the field of prevention and protection against natural or man-made disasters. Another impact of the opinion can be seen in the discussion on improvements of the newly created EU Solidarity Fund which may well lead, at a later stage, to adjustments regarding its legal basis²⁰.

3.3.1.3 Simplification of Structural Funds

In accordance with the White Paper on European Governance which called on the CoR to "play a more proactive role in examining policy, for example through the preparation of exploratory reports in advance of Commission proposals" and the cooperation protocol of September 2001 between the European Commission and the Committee of the Regions, which encourages the Committee of the Regions "to draw up strategic documents reviewing matters which the Commission regards as important; these outlook reports shall explore in greater depth problems in areas where the Committee of the Regions has the appropriate local information resources" the CoR prepared in 2003, upon the

¹⁹ CdR 104/2003 fin

²⁰ European Commission, 23rd Report on the action taken on the opinions delivered by the Committee of the Regions

request of Commissioner Barnier, an Opinion on how management of cohesion policy could be simplified after 2006²¹.

Outlook report on the simplification of Structural Funds

The preparation of the outlook report was characterised by a wide discussion throughout Europe using four key tools in the consultation exercise: a questionnaire sent to the political authorities responsible for the bodies currently administering the European Structural Funds, national focus groups under the political responsibility of the members of the COTER Commission working group, debate in the COTER working group and regular contacts between the rapporteurs and the European Commission.

The submission of this report to Commissioner Barnier meant that some thorough-going action could be taken on the CoR's recommendations before the adoption of the third cohesion report. The report took on board some of the CoR's recommendations. It addressed key issues such as the application of the subsidiarity principle, control and execution of the Community budget, the added value of cohesion policy, and coordination of the various Structural Funds.

3.3.2 Transport policy

The establishment and development of pan-European networks for transport, telecommunications and energy is part of the Community's general strategy for cohesion, aimed at harmonious planning and development across the Union. The objective of the trans-European networks (TENs) is to connect national infrastructures in a coherent manner by links, nodes and corridors and to ensure continuity of services between islands, landlocked and peripheral regions and central regions, with aid in particular from the Cohesion Fund. The Commission proposed on 1 October 2003, a new revision of the TEN-T network guidelines and of the TEN-T financial rules with the aim to adapt the TEN-T to the new enlarged EU. Moving ahead with TEN-T suggests substantial gains for the Union's economy and for society, which in the long term could amount to an estimated 0.23 % growth in GDP. Losses due to congestion are estimated to be in the region of 0.5 % of GDP, the delay in investment in transport TENs cost the economy at least €8 billion each year measured in terms of cost of lost time and account for 2% of transport emissions²².

Community financial aid for the Ten-T

In the context of the revision, the Council requested in September 2003 a Committee of the Regions' Opinion on transport and links in Europe in the local and regional context, taking into account major cross-border infrastructure projects, which has been adopted at the plenary session in February 2004. The Opinion on "Corridors and TEN-T: a lever for growth and vector of European cohesion and The development of a Euro-Mediterranean transport network" emphasized in line with the Van Miert-

²¹ Letter of referral of 23 July 2003 from Commissioner Barnier to the CoR President, Mr Bore, requesting a Committee of the Regions Opinion on the implementation of programmes financed under the Structural Funds.

²² COM(2004) 579 final p. 4f.

Report the need for a long term vision against the background of enlargement and the development of multi-modal corridors beyond the Union's borders. It further underlined the need for a clear prioritisation for the various TEN-T projects to channel financial resources efficiently. The most recent Proposal of the Commission for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down general rules for the granting of Community financial aid in the field of trans-European transport and energy networks and modifying Regulation (EC) no. 2236/95 of the Council²³ took up a number of proposals supported and recommendations made by the CoR such as the concentration on projects which have the biggest needs (priority cross border projects), the provision of solid guarantees by the Member States based on a financial plan and firm commitments on the date of completion of the project and an increase in the rate of community co-financing.

The total amount of investments for realising the trans- European transport network (TEN-T) in the enlarged Union, as was approved by the Council and the Parliament on 29th April 2004, comes to more than €600 billion up to 2020. The current Financial Regulation which sets out the general rules to award Community financial aid to trans-European networks, has for the period 2000-2006 a budget envelope of €4,600 million (€4,170 million for transport), hardly more than €600 million per year for the period.

The capacity of regional airports – a contribution to the wider European discussion on airport capacity and efficiency

Commissioner Loyola de Palacio also asked for an outlook opinion on regional airport capacity, which was drawn up in the first half of 2003. There will be a wide inter-institutional debate about this first outlook opinion. The Commission is preparing a consultation paper on airport efficiency and airport capacity in the EU which should help to define a role for the EU on optimising existing airport capacity and welcomed the timely contribution for this work supporting a clarification of the role of the regional airports. The observations made by the CoR regarding a distinction between better access to major gateways from regional gateways and improved attractiveness of point-to-point traffic were in particular highlighted by the Commission. Work on this matter has continued in 2004 as the subject has become hugely relevant since the state aid/low-cost airline Ryanair case.

3.3.3 Tourism

Through its 8 million people directly employed in the EU tourism sector, tourism's direct contribution in terms of jobs is particularly significant in some tourism-intensive economies. It also has an important indirect effect on employment in related services. Tourism is seen as a major opportunity for job creation over the coming years, in particular in less developed and peripheral regions. European tourism is largely an SME-dominated sector, with over 99% of firms employing fewer than 250 individuals. The COTER Commission followed up the CoR's October 2002 opinion (CdR 99/2002), and will keep a close eye on the development of the European Commission's strategy for the future of European tourism. As part of its work to promote the sustainable development of

²³

COM(2004) 475 final

tourism, COTER supported the Florence Euromeeting, which brought together 400 participants to discuss sustainable tourism.

3.4 **The pursuit of the Lisbon agenda – structural reforms for increased competitiveness and the modernisation of the European Social Model**

A meaningful concept of competitiveness at a national or regional level defines a competitive area as one that can maintain high rates of growth and employment in the medium-term²⁴. The broader objectives of the Lisbon strategy included achieving an employment rate of 70 per cent (60 per cent for women) from an average of 61 percent in the EU and an EU average annual real growth rate of three percent.

Over the last decade the rate of growth in the Union has fallen to a level of just 2%. At the same time, the Union welcomed in 2004 ten new Member States whose relative weight accounts for 20% of the EU population but only 6% of its GDP. In view of the mixed economic performance in the Union and the persistent shortfall in productivity and employment rates, an upturn in growth and an acceleration of structural reforms have been a central policy objective. At the same time the new Member States have often 2 to 3 times higher growth rates than the old EU members and are – after having had to fulfil the Copenhagen economic criteria - more flexible than the old EU - 15. Besides, the new market of 455 million consumers provides many opportunities for business development also on a global scale.

Thus, the issue of the fundamentals of national and regional competitiveness is a core question for regional development in Europe.

The CoR (CdR 224/2002) proposed to launch a study into the **role that regional and local authorities play in augmenting productivity and competitiveness**. The 2003 edition of the European Competitiveness Report, discussed during the Competitiveness Council in November 2003 contains a specific study on regional competitiveness in the EU and the role of policy-makers at the regional level²⁵.

Within the horizontal strategic approach of the Lisbon strategy the main issues concerning the regional dimension of economic and social policy were:

- the modernisation of the European social model, investing in people and combating social exclusion;
- the structural reforms for competitiveness and innovation including reduction of red tape to promote [entrepreneurship](#) and improvement of conditions for SME and the completion of the internal market;

²⁴ For alternative definitions of regional competitiveness see European Competitiveness Report 2003 SEC(2003) 1299

²⁵ European Competitiveness Report 2003 SEC(2003) 1299

- a healthy economic outlook and favourable growth prospects by applying an appropriate macro-economic policy mix.

Since the creation of the European Communities, social policy has always been lagging behind economic policy and it is probably one of the major achievements of the Lisbon Strategy to try to put them on an equal footing. The CoR has emphasised throughout all their activities the need for a strong interaction between the different elements of the policy triangle of economic, employment and social policies.

3.4.1 The European social model from a regional and local perspective

The current social policy agenda of the European Union outlined in the Commission Communication of June 2000 and approved by the Nice European Council in December 2000 covers the period until 2005, the year 2003, therefore, constituted a midterm phase, providing information for reorientation and strategic direction.

The European social model adopted by the Barcelona European Council in March 2002 had been defined as follows: “The European social model is based on good economic performance, a high level of social protection and education and social dialogue”. This definition relies on the two basic elements of the social model in the European Union: a tradition of social dialogue and a high level of social protection against the risks of life. It also stresses the necessity to combine social cohesion with good economic performance.

An important thread for 2003 has been the activities supporting the **European year for people with disabilities**. A crucial issue for the success was whether it would produce sustainable results beyond 2003 and could mainstream disability issues into relevant Community policies and develop concrete actions in crucial areas. The CoR not only supported these aims through its consultative function preparing an Opinion on the European Action Plan²⁶ but was also acting as a multiplier for the central messages of this Action Plan.

Regional Dimension of Disability Policies – Seminar with the European Disability Forum and the Rioja Government (16-17 December 2003)

There are approximately 37 million people with disabilities in the European Union. However, there is a serious lack of understanding of what disability means. Disabled people are often excluded from society through poor education and unemployment, leading to poverty. The seminar aimed at awareness-raising and called upon the EU to finance programmes with a horizontal approach to the everyday problems of people with disabilities. An important step is the dissemination and application of the Agenda 22 in most European municipalities to which the CoR contributed. The Agenda 22

²⁶

Opinion on the European Commission’s Communication “Equal opportunities for people with disabilities: A European Action Plan” COM (2003) 650 final

comprises a set of specific rules relating to disability, laying down practical objectives in terms of employment, training and integration.

Participating in the labour market allows people to earn a living and to participate more fully in society. It also gives individuals additional dignity and a greater degree of independence. Social inclusion, the labour market aspect of the Lisbon strategy works by investing in people, active labour market policies and mitigating labour market frictions resulting from existing systems of social protection. The CoR closely followed the round of National Action Plans against poverty and Social

Inclusion, as well as the mid-term review of the Social Agenda *and emphasised on various occasions through contributions of its representatives the "cost of non-social policies"*.²⁷

The regional and local levels have a considerable employment potential, especially in terms of promoting social inclusion, gender²⁸ and democratic participation. It is here, in the field of social inclusion where the Lisbon Strategy fares well in comparison with the US economy or an average of non-European OECD economies²⁹. However, an efficient articulation between the different levels of government is an essential condition for the release of the strong job creation potential of the local and regional level, mostly untapped so far. Local jobs can e.g. satisfy demand so far unmet by public or private sector, especially in the social economy and third system sectors.

European Forum on Local Development and Employment, Rhodes, Greece (16-17 May 2003)

The close cooperation between the Commission and the CoR in the field of employment commenced in 2000. One step within this activity was the preparation of an opinion on the proposal for a Council Decision on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States³⁰. The CoR demanded, within this cooperation, the organisation of a forum dealing with local development and employment, which was then organised on 16-17 May 2003. The Committee of the Regions, local and regional actors, national parliaments; the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee met with the Commissioner for Employment and Social Affairs of the European Commission, Mrs Anna Diamantopoulou, and exchanged experiences and information on the development of the European Employment Strategy (EES). The CoR expressed its views on how to involve all actors for jobs and quality of life at local level.

One of the broader objectives of the Lisbon strategy includes an increase of the employment rate of women to 60%. Considering gender equality, the CoR prepared an Opinion on the Proposal for a

²⁷ European Commission Conference on the Mid-Term review of the Social Policy Agenda, 19-20 March 2003, Brussels

²⁸ The CoR adopted in July 2003 an Opinion on the Communication on the implementation of gender mainstreaming in the Structural Funds programming documents 2000-2006, COM(2002) 748 final, CdR 83/2003 fin, which was favourably received by the Commission subscribed to the points underlined in the Opinion.

²⁹ World Economic Forum, The Lisbon Review An Assessment of Policies and Reforms in Europe

³⁰ COM(2003) 176 final, CdR 137/2003 fin

Council Directive implementing the principle of equal treatment between women and men in the access to and supply of goods and services, published in November 2003. Considering that fulfilling the Lisbon goals of economic growth and increased employment by 2010 and beyond depend on the shape and dynamics of immigration, the CoR also focused on the interaction between immigration and employment. The timing of activities in this field was particularly important because the year 2004 marks the end of the first stage of the so-called "Tampere" agenda, a five year agenda, agreed at the Tampere EU Summit of 1999, which sets out the basis for the goal of constructing an "Area of Freedom, Security and Justice" across the Union. Particularly, in the context of an increasingly multi-cultural society, special attention was paid to combating youth unemployment.

Immigration, integration and employment – hearing on 22 September

Problems raised by immigration are still dealt with at national level, with the local and European levels excluded. However, it is the authorities at the sub-national level which are responsible for taking care of migrants' integration through housing, planning, education, health and the labour market responsibilities directly impacting on integration. The role of the local and regional authorities is still too insignificant compared to their responsibilities. The work on the Opinion³¹ on this topic was complemented by the organisation of a hearing on the topic with the participation of representatives of several research institutes (Centre for International Studies and Research, CNRS/IEP, Paris, Berlin Institute for Comparative Social Research) and Mr Claude Moraes, MEP and author of the EP's Report on the respective Communication. The debate was all the more topical since the Union's Italian presidency had announced that it supported a more active immigration policy using the possibility of establishing quotas to promote, on the one hand, legal immigration into Europe and, on the other, stronger measures to combat illegal immigration in cooperation with third countries.

In the light of the proposals to amend the Regulation which establishes the European Observatory for Racism and Xenophobia, the CoR also elaborated an opinion on this matter.

3.4.2 The completion of the internal market, structural reforms for competitiveness and innovation, industrial and enterprise policy

Since the abolition of EU internal frontiers ten years ago, the **Internal Market** has boosted EU economic growth by at least 1.8% adding nearly 900 billion euro to the EU's collective prosperity and helping create 2.5 million extra jobs³². The Internal Market Strategy is part of the so-called "guidelines package" alongside the Broad Economic Policy Guidelines and the Employment Guidelines which have been given a three-year perspective.

2003, being the ten-year anniversary of the internal market, led to a stock-taking and future-looking exercise to which the CoR pro-actively contributed by putting forward suggestions for the period of 2003-2006.

³¹ COM(2003) 336 final, CdR 223/2003 fin

³² SEC(2002) 1417 of 7.1.2003

Internal Market Strategy (2003-2006)

The CoR adopted an Opinion on the Internal Market Strategy³³, specifically requested by the European Commission, in February 2003. The vast majority of points raised in the opinion were reflected in the final strategy document: network industry liberalisation in full respect of Treaty guarantees for services of general interest, liberalisation of cross-border service provision, recognition of professional qualifications, financial market integration, free movement of goods, reduction in the total amount of state aid while redirecting it towards horizontal objectives, the importance of price comparisons as a way of measuring the degree of integration achieved and the need to close the transposition deficit. An important factor for this strong impact had been the timing, the adoption in February 2003 occurred well in advance of the adoption of the Internal Market Strategy at the beginning of May 2003. An area of particular interest has been the Committee's support for the SOLVIT problem-solving network – already in 2002 the CoR had co-organised, upon the request of the Commission, a special SOLVIT Workshop - and it was suggested that the local and regional authorities might in the future serve as a kind of relay³⁴.

Industrial policy is horizontal in nature and aims at securing framework conditions favourable to industrial competitiveness. Though manufacturing has declined considerably in the past years it still accounts for a large share of the wealth generated in the EU. The share of the services sector in EU output has increased from 52% in 1970 to 71% in 2001 while that of manufacturing decreased from 30% to 18% in the same period.

Most industrial policy is not carried out at the EU level, but under the competence of the Member States. Therefore the open method of co-ordination provides a context in which policy performance can be discussed, developed and improved. The regional dimension of industrial policy had been pointed out by the CoR in its opinion on the Commission's Communication on "Industrial Policy in an Enlarged Europe"³⁵. With regard to regional policy the Commission recommended that the potential offered in this policy area needs to be fully tapped as in the past to accompany restructuring in a number of sectors as a result of shifts in demand and increased global competition.

The CoR clearly approved of the proposed "screening" exercise of EU policies, highlighting the role of regional policy and knowledge policy to be mobilised to improve their interaction with industrial policy³⁶. The Commission gave a favourable response to almost all of the CoR's recommendations. Specific attention was given to the regional dimension/cohesion dimension in the communication that

³³ CdR 341/2002 fin

³⁴ SOLVIT is a network of centres based in the national administration of each Member State, to resolve in an informal way problems arising from possible misapplication of Internal Market Rules by a public administration in another Member State.

³⁵ CdR 150/2003 fin, COM (2002) 714 final

³⁶ The Commission announced in its communication that it intended over the coming months to screen the way in which its main policies interface with the competitiveness of EU industry, COM (2002) 714 p. 31

followed up the Industrial Policy Communication, the Communication “Fostering structural change: an industrial policy for an enlarged Europe”³⁷.

The CoR also endeavoured to position itself in the wide debate that took place on the availability of high quality of services for all citizens through the Green Paper on services of general interest where the subsidiarity aspect plays an important role: It is primarily for the competent national, regional and local authorities to define, organise, finance and monitor services of general interest. Services of general interest linked to the function of welfare and social protection are clearly a matter of national, regional and local responsibilities. Nevertheless, there is a recognised role for the Community in promoting co-operation and co-ordination in these areas³⁸.

Services of General Interest

In its Opinion on the Green Paper on Services of General Interest³⁹ the CoR emphasised that the public authority which is responsible for SGIs is free to decide whether to provide the service itself, in conjunction with other authorities or to choose other solutions, including private-sector options. The subsidiarity principle – both horizontal and vertical - should be recognised fully such that local and regional authorities are, as a matter of principle, free to decide how to provide such services. Basing that decision on local circumstances ensures the best possible solution for the citizens and the community. It recommended that general interest provisions be enshrined in the Treaty to provide a basis for regulating the SGI sector in the EU, while at the same time clearly stating that it is the task of the Member States and their sub-national authorities to lay down the actual principles and conditions for the provision of SGIs. The Opinion of the CoR was rendered as part of the consultation process launched by the Green Paper. The Commission presented its conclusions from this consultation, including the issues raised by the CoR, in the White Paper on Services of General Interest, adopted in May 2004.

Finally, concerning enterprise policy, the focus was on a new enterprise policy instrument containing quantitative objectives and benchmarks presented in the Communication on a better environment for companies and on the wide debate on competitiveness launched through the Green Paper on Entrepreneurship.

3.4.3 Economic policy, social protection and healthcare

The Lisbon Conclusions as an important step towards the overall goal defined modernised and improved social protection systems. This view was further reinforced in the Social Policy Agenda

³⁷ COM(2004) 274 final

³⁸ The Community for its part has competencies in areas that are also relevant for services of general interest, such as: the internal market, competition and State aid, free movement, social policy, transport, environment, health, consumer policy, trans-European networks, industry, economic and social cohesion, research, trade and development co-operation, and taxation, COM (2003) 270 final

³⁹ COM(2003) 270 final, CdR 149/2003 fin

adopted by the Nice European Council. At its heart was the idea of a policy triangle involving the positive interaction between economic, employment and social protection policies. Macroeconomic policy goals and market liberalisation carry implications for the organisation of social protection systems and economic and employment policies and are dependent on reforms in social protection domains such as pensions, healthcare and care systems. Social protection is – also in the light of the demographic development in Europe – seen more and more as having the potential to play an important role as a productive factor. Streamlining the economic and employment policy coordination processes has involved the creation of a new unified timetable for the work, both before and after, each Spring European Council, within a framework of a three-yearly cycle (2003-2005).

The role of the Stability and Growth Pact to maintain stability-oriented macro-economic policies was acknowledged by the CoR, nevertheless it perceived a need to include more specific criteria to take account of public investment, in particular in infrastructure and schemes for social and employment integration. Additionally, the relation between monetary and budgetary policy deserved more attention and was to be studied according to the CoR's political priorities from the sub-national perspective as well, given that local and regional authorities are responsible for a large part of public spending.

The necessity to streamline as well the open coordination in the field of social protection stems from two observations; the two other streamlined Treaty-based processes (economic and employment policy processes) and the work under the OMC for pensions⁴⁰. Consequently, the proposals by the European Commission in the respective Communication foresaw that future work on social protection should strengthen and complement the Treaty-based processes regarding employment and macro-economic policy (BEPGs and the EES).

The CoR supported the core objectives of the Commission's communication⁴¹ (e.g. the use of the open method of coordination as the means to achieve a stronger policy cooperation among Member States) and put forward a number of requests such as the simplification of the administrative burden and a continuous assessment of the open method of coordination, a distinction between the different degrees of coordination in different policy fields and the importance and delicacy of questions regarding the future treatment of healthcare. The Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council addressed many of the points raised in the opinion of the CoR such as the simplification and the distinction between different degrees of coordination.

The CoR also co-organised the 6th European Health Forum, in Gastein, Austria, on 1-4 October 2003.

3.5 Sustainable development

Sustainability has three pillars – economic, social and environmental. The objective of "sustainable development" i.e. ensuring long-term quality of life was added to the Lisbon agenda at the Stockholm European Council in March 2001.

⁴⁰ COM(2003) 261 final, p. 6

⁴¹ COM(2003) 261 final

The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg in September 2002 was a milestone in the global strive to achieve sustainable development. The EU strongly committed itself to the Johannesburg goals, i.e. changing unsustainable consumption and production patterns and ensuring sustainable management and protection of natural resources. Consequently, the CoR concentrated its consultative work in 2003 on documents related to these issues.

3.5.1 Environment and energy

The 6th Community Environment Action Plan addressed the key environmental objectives and priorities based on an assessment of the state of the environment and of prevailing trends. The new programme identifies four environmental areas to be tackled for improvements: Climate Change - Nature and Biodiversity, Environment, Health and quality of life, and Natural Resources and Waste.

6th Community Environment Action Plan – Opinions on thematic strategies

The CoR adopted several opinions on sustainable development, notably on the thematic strategies mentioned in the 6th environmental action programme, i.e. opinions on *Towards a thematic strategy on the prevention and recycling and prevention of waste*⁴² and on *Towards a thematic strategy for soil protection*⁴³.

The CoR stressed in the latter the importance of the subsidiarity principle for this issue - many problems connected to soil can be solved at Member States', regional and local level- the need for the widest possible definition of soil and to take into account the highly heterogeneous nature of soil. The CoR proposed, among other issues, further investigation into the definition of threshold values for the pre-desertification stage and demanded clear guidelines for good agricultural practices and CAP support for soil protection. The Commission supported these requests and the idea to work on the development of the Soil Strategy in a similar way to the approach taken for the implementation of the Water Framework Directive.

The CoR also responded to the Communication: *Towards a thematic strategy on the sustainable use and management of resources*⁴⁴. The communication on a *Thematic strategy on the urban environment*, initially foreseen for 2003 (adopted in February 2004) will be the subject of a CoR Opinion in the autumn 2004⁴⁵.

The impact of the CoR's opinions will be visible in late 2004 and 2005 when the European Commission will publish the final strategies on the above-mentioned issues.

42 CdR 239/2003 fin

43 CdR 190/2002 fin

44 CdR 11/2004 fin

45 CdR 93/2004 fin

Further opinions concerning natural resources were adopted on the Commission Communication on *Integrated Product Policy*⁴⁶, and the Directive on the "*protection of groundwater*"⁴⁷. Furthermore, the CoR adopted an Opinion on the "*Regulation on forests and environmental interactions in the Community*"⁴⁸.

Opinion on the directive on the quality of bathing water⁴⁹

The proposal for a Directive on the quality of bathing water has received wide interest. The Directive aimed at updating and simplifying the existing 1976 Directive which sets binding standards for bathing waters throughout the EU. Since the responsibility for the monitoring and protection lies with the regional and local authorities in many of the Member States, direct financial implications for these levels were therefore expected.

The CoR fully appreciated the spirit of the proposed directive. However, it attached a specific importance to Standards - which are updated to scientific progress and to information given to the public. These recommendations have been taken up by the European Commission in its amended proposal for the directive (COM(2004) 245 final).

Another focus in the European Commissions work programme for 2003 was on energy efficiency and renewable energies, which is intrinsically linked to the overall principle of sustainable development. The CoR continued its work in this field, for example, by adopting an Opinion on the *Proposal for a directive on the promotion of cogeneration based on a useful heat demand in the internal energy market*⁵⁰. The recommendations in this opinion were partially taken up in the final legislative text⁵¹, notably the demand for a single and flexible definition of cogeneration.

3.5.2 Agriculture and Fisheries - including rural development and food safety

Further to its Communication on the *Mid-Term Review (MTR)* of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in 2002, which aimed at promoting a more sustainable model of agriculture, the European Commission issued the *legislative proposals* for almost all Common Market Organisations on the basis of the MTR during 2003.

46 CdR 159/2003 fin

47 CdR 240/2003 fin

48 CdR 345/2002 fin

49 CdR 17/2003 fin

50 CdR 344/2002 fin

51 Directive 2004/8/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 February 2004 on the promotion of cogeneration based on a useful heat demand in the internal energy market and amending Directive 92/42/EEC.

These proposals were closely monitored; an Opinion on the *Common Market Organisations for the cereals, rice, dried fodder and milk sectors* were subsequently adopted, commenting on all three main aspects of the CAP Reform (decoupling, modulation and cross-compliance)⁵². The CoR opinion approved the general approach underlying the Reform. In autumn 2003, the European Commission published its proposal for the reform of the so-called Mediterranean products (tobacco, olive oil, cotton) by applying the principles approved by the CoR in the above-mentioned opinion.

Common Agriculture Policy: Cooperation with Candidate countries

With regard to enlargement, the CoR had expressed its concern at the insufficient involvement of local and regional authorities in the accession process. A way to contribute towards improving their involvement in the accession process was by their involvement in the work of the DEVE Commission. The situation of these countries was not only taken into account in the CoR opinions, the Commission also built up a constant exchange of views with representatives from the Candidate Countries. Thus, several speakers from Central and East European Countries actively participated in seminars and hearings organised by the Commission. In view of the importance of agriculture in the acceding countries, a special focus was given to this issue. The seminar on “*The restructuring of the agricultural sector in the candidate countries: East German agriculture after the unification, an example*” in Tangermünde, Germany, September 2003, was especially dedicated to the situation in the candidate countries. Alongside CoR members, specialists from regional ministries and universities, a European Commission representative, high-level representatives from the Ministries of Agriculture of the Lublin Region, Poland and Ukraine had the opportunity to give a report on the situation in their respective countries.

Animal diseases, such as FMD and BSE, had far reaching consequences for producers and consumers in large parts of the EU. During 2003 the CoR aimed at focusing on the follow-up to the White Paper on *Food Safety* and the implementation of the regulatory framework for food safety. Opinions were adopted on a draft directive on the *Foot and mouth disease*⁵³ and on a *Regulation for official controls on the safety of foodstuffs and animal feed*⁵⁴.

Rural Development: Shaping future policy

In November 2003, the **Second European Conference on Rural Development** (Cork II) took place in Salzburg, in which Members of the CoR played an active part. At the opening of this conference, alongside European Commissioners and national ministers, DEVE member Robert Savy, rapporteur on the CAP reform, took the floor as the CoR representative and gave a much-echoed speech on this important issue, taking up the key elements of the opinion prepared by him.

52 CdR 66/2003 fin

53 CdR 65/2003 fin

54 CdR 67/2003 fin

Mr Savy also chaired the workshop on *Rural Development* in the Leipzig Conference in May 2003 on "*The future of European cohesion policy*". The discussions of the Salzburg Conference largely influenced the Commission's proposal for the rural development policy for the period 2007-2013, published in July 2004. In the field of rural development, the DEVE Commission also adopted an own-initiative report on *Community action for mountain areas*⁵⁵.

The aim of promoting sustainability was also underlying the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy, which came into force on 1 January 2003. The mission of this reform was to bring to an end the over-fishing of EU waters in order to secure long-term sustainable fishing, and to allow for balanced restructuring of the fishing sector, thereby giving better prospects to people whose livelihoods depend on fishing. In addition, the European Commission has made arrangements for better governance in the CFP with the creation of Regional Advisory Councils. Taking better account of the subsidiarity principle is in line with CoR requests in earlier opinions.

In addition, the CoR responded to the European Commission's Communication on a *Strategy for the sustainable development of European aquaculture* and its Communication on the *Protection of the marine environment*. The Rapporteur of the CoR Opinion on *A strategy for the sustainable development of European aquaculture* also represented the CoR at a conference on "Developing European Aquaculture", in Athens, Greece, May 2003.

Undertaking of Impact Reports on environmental legislation

In 2002, the European Commission had expressed its interest in the CoR undertaking impact reports on the implementation of EU environmental legislation on regional and local level. These impact reports could be a valuable contribution of the CoR alongside its consultative work to the shaping of future legislation and could also lead to a better implementation of existing legislation by gathering and exchanging knowledge on best practices. During 2003, the DEVE Commission explored this possibility further with DG ENVI. The process is still ongoing and could lead to the elaboration of an impact report in 2004.

3.6 A dynamic and culturally diverse society based on knowledge and innovation

The European Commission had identified the acceleration of the implementation of the Lisbon strategy as a key objective for 2003⁵⁶. The areas, in which the CoR has been active in this respect, cultural diversity, research, education and training and information society are strongly interlinked.

⁵⁵ CdR 182/2002 fin

⁵⁶ COM(2002) 590 final

3.6.1 Audiovisual media and the respect for cultural diversity

Cultural diversity alongside the respect of subsidiarity, a key principle the CoR, successfully claimed in its contributions to the European Convention⁵⁷.

Cultural diversity Europe's wealth – seminar in Graz, 17 October 2003

Graz, European Capital of Culture 2003, hosted the CoR's seminar on the importance of cultural diversity as a basic principle underlying the European integration process, the promotion of these principles through the cultural industry, their contribution to local and regional development as well as the promotion of linguistic diversity.

Speakers at this seminar were, among others, the President of the Assembly of European Regions, Mrs Liese Prokop, the Mayor of Graz, Mr Siegfried Nagl, Mr Bojan Brezigar, President of the European Bureau of Lesser Used Languages, Mr Adrian Butler, Director of European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe (located in Graz).

The audiovisual media is a cultural industry par excellence and central for the dissemination of social values and the functioning of democratic societies. Audiovisual works are, at the same time, economic and cultural goods.

The role of local and regional authorities in this sector is manifold. They

- support the cooperation between different activity areas of the audiovisual industry,
- provide information and are increasingly active in the provision of online-services,
- are the reference system for the majority of citizens and
- are highly active in regional and local film production.

The support of this sector and the development of its services is an integral element of the completion of the internal market. The year 2003 was marked by a review of the regulatory measures – the consultation process on the “**Television without Frontiers**” **Directive** - and supporting instruments – in particular the MEDIA Programmes - in this industry.

Extension of the Media Programmes

The CoR supported the extension of the **MEDIA Programmes** to the end of 2006⁵⁸. In particular, the recommendations of the CoR on the role of the MEDIA Desks and to ensure public access to European audiovisual works (notably through the Promotion line of the MEDIA Plus programme) has been taken into account by the Commission. The work on this Opinion was the start of the

⁵⁷ See 3.1

⁵⁸ COM(2003) 188 final, COM(2003) 191 final, CdR 175/2003 fin

consultation process for the new MEDIA Programme, which was adopted by the Commission in June 2004⁵⁹. The CoR used this opportunity to put forward its preliminary views concerning the framework of the future programmes in these fields: stressing in particular the need to ensure that local and regional initiatives coordinated by local and regional authorities are fully supported in the programmes.

At a European level, the necessary balance must be kept to guarantee subsidiarity in an area where major competences are at the national and regional level while ensuring that European companies can fully benefit from the European dimension. The directive “*Television without frontiers*”⁶⁰ forms together with two other directives⁶¹ the core of the regulatory instruments within the area of audiovisual services. The Directive lays down the minimum standards for regulation of the content of television broadcasts that the Member States must guarantee. The CoR requested in its opinion on the *Fourth Report on the application of the Directive*⁶² the involvement of local and regional authorities in the supporting measures of the audiovisual industry and the support of Regional consortia consisting of stakeholders in training, financing, production and distribution. The work in this field is still ongoing.

3.6.2 Research, education and training

The Lisbon goal of a knowledge-based economy and society by better policies has been concretised for the research area by the Barcelona European Council in March 2002: In order to close the gap between the EU and its main competitors there must be a significant boost of the overall R&D effort in the Union, overall spending on R&D and innovation should approach 3% of GDP by 2010. Two-thirds of this new investment should come from the private sector. To reach the targets set in 2002, research expenditure of industry has to be increased each year by 9% and public expenditure annually by 6%. Quantitatively, the role of direct EU research funding can only be marginal. The EU measures can, however, contribute into and they are necessary for strengthening the commitment. Given that, more than 80% of public investment in research is carried out by local, regional and national authorities, the CoR called for a stronger involvement at sub-national level.

59 The CoR also issued an Opinion on the extension of the “Culture 2000” programme

60 Council Directive 89/553/EEC as amended by Directive 97/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council

61 The directive on electronic commerce (directive 2000/31/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 8 June 2000) clarifies some legal concepts and the harmonisation of certain aspects so that the services of the information society can fully gain from the internal market while the Council directive 1993/83/EEC on the coordination of certain rules concerning copyright and rights related to copyright applicable to satellite broadcasting and cable retransmission (“cable and satellite Directive”).

62 COM(2002) 778 final, CdR 90/2003 fin

Investing in research: an action plan for Europe⁶³

In its Opinion on the *Action Plan*, the CoR urged the Commission to involve the regions – particularly in measures targeted towards the development of new career structures for researchers and in preparing the Structural Funds’ programmes to improve the R&D investment capacity in an efficient and strategically effective manner. The CoR Rapporteur, Mr Lars Nordström, together with the EP Rapporteur, Mr Rolf Linkohr, in a joint press conference at the European Parliament for their respective reports, both made a plea for action by Member States in terms of research investment and an increase in budget for the Seventh Framework Programme. In the “3% action plan”, the Commission indicated its intention to set up a Mutual Learning Platform for the regions. This should – according to the Commission – enable the regions to exchange experiences with regard to R&D investment and policy. A potential collaboration between the CoR and the DG for Research is currently being discussed.

In March 2000 the Lisbon European Council adopted the European Research Area (ERA), thereby laying the foundation for a common science and technology policy across Europe. An important role for the development of regional and local innovation capabilities lies within the remit of the universities. They are crucial for the European Research Area⁶⁴.

The role of universities in local and regional development – Outlook Opinion⁶⁵

The CoR had been invited by Commissioners Reding, Busquin and de Palacio to draw up an Outlook Opinion which looks at ways of reinforcing the interaction of higher education and local and regional authorities so as to enhance the role of higher education in a Europe of skills and knowledge. An appendix to this Outlook Opinion presents examples of best practice on local and authority cooperation, the involvement of universities in regional networks as well as the promotion of the regional impact of higher education across the EU. Many suggestions outlined in this Outlook Opinion have been received favourably by the Commission and have resulted in further collaboration. The work on this Outlook Opinion has also been important for the contribution of the CoR to the Conference on “*Europe of Knowledge 2020: A vision for University-Based Research and Innovation*” which took place on 25-28 April 2004, in Liège, Belgium. As a result of this conference a high-level expert forum on University-based research has been founded.

⁶³ CdR 246/2003 fin

⁶⁴ COM(2002) 499 final, CdR 328/2002 fin

⁶⁵ CdR 89/2003 fin

Regions of knowledge

The CoR supported strongly in its Outlook Opinion and in its Opinion on *“Investing in research: an action plan for Europe”*⁶⁶ the creation of the **Regions of knowledge** pilot action. On 1 August 2003, the European Commission launched this action with a budget of €2.5 million for the first year. The pilot action aims to increase collaboration on a transnational/transregional basis to enable learning between European regions and the identification of model and activities demonstrating the central role of knowledge in the role of local economies.

In 2003, another important issue has been the promotion of lifelong learning strategies as put forward in the CoR Opinion on *Making a European area of lifelong learning a reality*⁶⁷, this is an excellent example of the impact achieved by the CoR in its work.

R3L initiative – European Networks to promote the Local and Regional Dimension of Lifelong Learning

The initiative was set up (with a budget of €2 million) following close collaboration between the CoR and the DG for Education and Culture of the European Commission, in particular the rapporteur of the Opinion on lifelong learning in its framing and design. The pilot action involves education and training providers and relevant actors as well as local and regional authorities to develop “Learning Regions”. A high number of local and regional authorities are now participating in the 17 selected networks, encompassing 120 regions.

3.6.3 Information society

The action plan *“eEurope: an information society for all”* forms part of the Lisbon strategy. The CoR has focused much attention on the promotion of eEurope initiatives and how to harness Europe’s full “e-potential”, in particular in the field of eGovernment. eGovernment is an integral part of the Action Plan and comprises the promotion of proximity between local and regional authorities and the citizen as well as a tool for modernizing local and regional administrations by improving the delivery of public services online. The EDUC Commission adopted an Opinion on the *“Interoperable Delivery of pan-European eGovernment Services to Public Administrations, Businesses and Citizens (IDABC)”*⁶⁸ which enabled the conclusions of the following conference.

⁶⁶ COM(2003) 226 final, CdR 246/2003 fin

⁶⁷ CdR 49/2002 fin

⁶⁸ CdR 247/2003 fin

Local and regional eGovernment: connecting to citizens and improving efficiency – Conference, 12-13 May 2003, Santorini, Greece

Following the invitation put forward by Mr Panagiotis Rigas, Prefect of the Cyclades, and with the support of the Greek Presidency, the CoR organised a conference to promote the development of local and regional eGovernment measures looking at examples of best practice in this field. Mr Panagiotis Georgadis, the Secretary-General for Public Administration of the Greek Ministry of the Interior, participated along with representatives from the European Commission, the European Institute of Public Administration (EIPA), the Local Authorities' Telematic Network (ELANET/CEMR) and the European Regional Information Society (ERISA).

3.7 The inter-institutional dialogue and dialogue with the associations

3.7.1 The Committee of the Regions as a consultative and advisory body to the institutions

Local and regional authorities are responsible for implementing a large proportion of EU legislation. Thus the fact that local and regional authorities' point of view are taken into consideration in setting the EU's priorities as well as during the EU legislative process itself helps to reduce unnecessary European bureaucracy. This contributes considerably to enhancing the democratic legitimacy of the Union.

3.7.1.1 Relations with the European Parliament

During 2003 contacts between the Committee of the Regions and the European Parliament have been multiplied at various levels. EP rapporteurs have been invited regularly to participate in the debates held in CoR plenary sessions and committee meetings. At the same time contacts between CoR rapporteurs and their counterparts in the EP-committees have improved and the presence of CoR members at EP committee meetings has been increased. Elements of the current cooperation comprises of parallel plenary sessions, contacts with the European Parliament's Conference of Presidents and the Consultation of the CoR by the European Parliament.

Parallel Plenary Session in October 2003

The CoR and the EP held their annual parallel plenary session for the fourth time on 9 October 2003. The presence of the President of the European Parliament Mr Pat Cox, inviting CoR members "*to use all means to cooperate actively with their counterparts in the Parliament*", underlined the importance that the European Parliament gives to the development of this inter-institutional cooperation. On the occasion of the 2003 parallel session the Presidents of the Committee and the European Parliament issued a joint declaration on the Inter-governmental Conference dealing with the Treaty establishing a European Draft Constitution presented by the European Convention. Moreover, once again several joint activities took place during the parallel sessions in October 2003.

The four CoR political groups (PES, EPP, ELDR, and EA) held joint events and meetings with their respective European Parliamentary groups during the parallel plenary.

On 26 June 2003 a joint meeting of the EP's conference of Presidents, the Presidents of the CoR political groups and President Bore took place. The Presidents assessed the political outcome of the European Convention, discussed questions related to EU enlargement and the necessary preparations for the elections to European Parliament in 2004.

The more regular contacts between the EP and the CoR comprised of meetings between rapporteurs in particular for priority dossiers, mutual invitations to committee meetings and the monitoring of EP committees by the CoR secretariat.

The proposal to establish a more formal cooperation agreement between the CoR and the EP put forward by the European Parliament's Vice-president David Martin during the CoR-EP Parallel Session in 2002 has been re-introduced in the "Priorities of the CoR Presidency 2004-2006 and might be further discussed between the Presidents of the two institutions.

3.7.1.2 Relations with the European Commission

Over the last years the consultative function of the CoR with regard to the European Commission has strongly evolved. It covers today two distinct activities:

- the CoR's participation in the legislative process as foreseen in the Treaty establishing the European Community and
- the CoR's participation in so-called pre-legislative consultation launched by the European Commission according to the White Paper on European Governance⁶⁹, the Communication on "Better Lawmaking"⁷⁰ and the CoR-EC Cooperation agreement concluded in 2001⁷¹.

In 2003 both consultative activities have been further developed and strengthened.

The increased application of Rule 59 of the CoR's Rules of procedure, which allows the Committee to decide not to draw up an opinion or report on an EC document referred to it, further streamlined the consultative action⁷². Moreover, the operational cooperation between the CoR rapporteurs and the respective Commission services in the consultation process has been improved.

⁶⁹ COM(2001) 428 final, CdR 103/2001 fin

⁷⁰ COM(2002) 275 final, CdR 263/2002 fin

⁷¹ DI CdR 81/2001 rev. 2 The new future role of the CoR as foreseen in the European draft Constitution and the continuously developing activities of the CoR in the field of pre-legislative consultation have made it necessary to revise and to extend the cooperation agreement with the Commission. Preparatory work at administrative level is currently under way in an EC-CoR working group. Official negotiations at political level will start in the end of 2004.

⁷² Between March 2002 and June 2004 158 opinions have been adopted.

The new tool of outlook opinions/reports created with the CoR-EC Cooperation agreement in order to foster the CoR impact in the pre-legislative phase has been used 4 times during March 2002 and June 2004, Resolutions were drawn up 10 times and declaration 3 times. Examples of this can be found in the topical sections above.

In addition to its consultative role the CoR continuously developed its capacity to aggregate the political weight of the elected regional and local representatives of the EU 25 at European level, to create specific forums for discussion between the European Commission and regional and local authorities and to act as an efficient mediator between them.

For 2003 this role can be illustrated by two outstanding examples.

The conference in Leipzig in May 2003 as described above which dealt with the "Future of European Cohesion Policy". The final "Leipzig declaration" adopted by the conference after a thorough political debate provides a fine example for the CoR's willingness and capacity to go beyond its purely institutional role and to act as an efficient moderator of a broader political discussion process.

The second example also illustrates that the CoR has developed a strong image as the institution able to coordinate and effectively represent local and regional authorities at European level: In its communication on the "Dialogue between the European Commission and the associations of regional and local authorities"⁷³ adopted in December 2003 the Commission underlines the "essential role of the CoR in consulting regional and local actors". It recognises the privileged position that the CoR holds with the associations of regional and local authorities and calls on each of the regional and local authorities and their associations to further strengthen their respective ties with the CoR.

The Commission requests the CoR's support in organising its dialogue with the regional and local associations and "seeks to contribute to enhancing the intermediation role played by the CoR". The necessary cooperation between the Committee and the European Commission to realise this dialogue started in early 2004.

3.7.1.3 Relations with the Council of the European Union

The relations with the Council are still evolving and have clearly progressed in 2003.

For the first time since the creation of the Committee of the Regions the (Italian) Presidency of the Council requested the CoR to draw up an opinion on "*Transport and links in Europe in the context of local circumstances with special reference to major cross-border infrastructural works*"⁷⁴. The Italian Presidency took another important Council decision regarding the Committee of the Regions. On 16/17 October 2003 the Presidency organised a ministerial meeting attended by Member States,

⁷³ COM(2003) 811 final

⁷⁴ CdR 291/2003 fin

accession states and candidate countries. The meeting aimed at providing an opportunity for Ministers responsible for Regional Affairs to have an informal forum of discussion on the role of Regions and other Local authorities within the framework of the present debate on new ways of governance in the EU. The Ministers present at the meeting adopted a common Declaration on *"The role of the regions in the European Union"*.

In this document the Ministers and heads of delegations highlighted the "advantages of the increased participation of regional and local authorities in the process of European integration", underlining the "important role of the Committee of the Regions as an institutional representative of regional and local authorities in the context of the Union" and welcomed the proposals made by the European Convention to reinforce the involvement of regional and local authorities in the EU decision-making process.

Moreover, in 2003 the President of the CoR has been invited to attend the Informal Council meetings of the Ministers responsible for regional policy and to participate in their debates.

Another strand of the CoR's activities in 2003 was to develop a more consistent multilevel strategy to follow up the EU legislative process within the Council. CoR Members who were representing their Member State in the Council on the basis of Article 203 of the Treaty were invited to follow up decisions taken by the CoR and to bring them into the decision-making process of the Council. This inter-institutional approach will be continued and further developed.

The entry into force of the European Constitution will also have an influence on relations between the Council and the Committee of the Regions. Indeed, discussions on the implementation of the European Constitution's Protocol on the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, and more structured relations, will be necessary in order to ensure that both the Committee and the Council will be able to fulfil their obligations under this protocol.

3.7.2 Relations with the associations

As stated, the CoR has built up relations with the associations over a number of years. In May 2002 the CoR Bureau decided to step up co-operation between the Institution and the associations. This increased cooperation proved to be instrumental in providing the basis for a highly successful collaboration as regards the work of the European Convention on the Future of the European Union.

The systematic development of relations with the associations since May 2002, can be seen to contain six main steps.

1. Identification of the associations
2. Monitoring of their work
3. Regular contacts between the Secretaries General
4. Assistance of the associations in the preparation of CoR outlook opinions and opinions
5. Participation in hearings and attendance at meetings of the CoR commissions
6. Participation in CoR conferences/forums

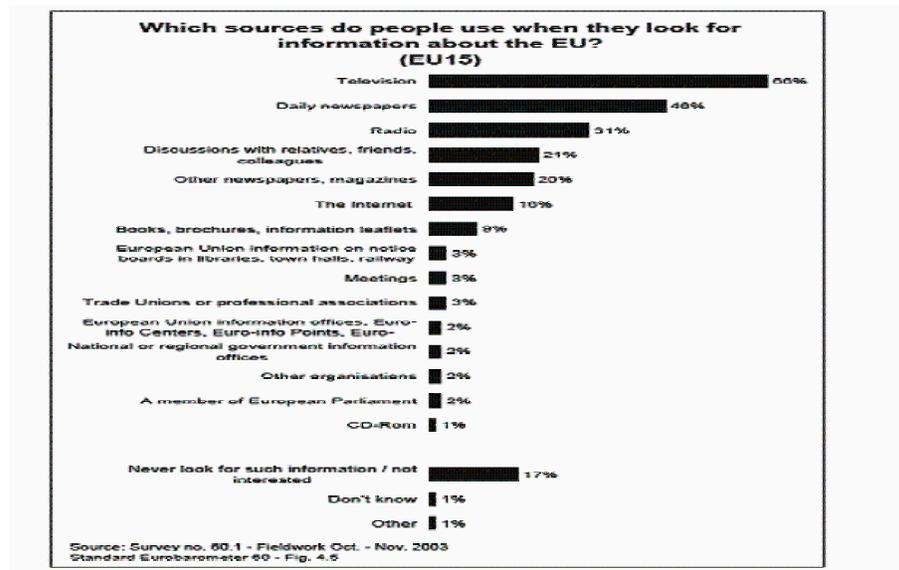
A detailed overview of these steps is provided in a separate report to the bureau, but the impact has clearly been a better integration of the regional and local associations to the work of the Union and a better use of the associations' networks in the process of bringing the Union closer to its citizens.

The success of this cooperation was recognised by the EC in the communication on dialogue with the associations *“The Commission considers it important that the new dialogue should serve the ties between the Committee of the Regions and the regional and local authorities it represents. To this end, in accordance with the recommendations in the White Paper on European Governance, it calls on each of the regional and local authorities and their associations to strengthen their respective ties with the Committee of the Regions.”*⁷⁵

3.8 Communication and interaction with the broader public

Two major objectives dominated the CoR's communications work in 2003: (i) to raise the profile and impact of its consultative work and its political message, and (ii) to demonstrate its capacity to expand opportunities for dialogue between regional and local authorities and European institutions. A Eurobarometer survey in October/November 2003 among the EU-15 showed that traditional media are the sources most likely to be used to obtain information about the EU.

Table 1: Information sources about the EU



75

COM(2003) 81 final, p. 6

3.8.1 Media

Among the key objectives of the Press and Communication unit are:

- a need to improve image and clarify the role of the CoR in relation to the other EU institutions;
- to project itself as the legitimate representative for the local and regional authorities;
- to be recognised as an essential partner in the dialogue between the EU institutions and levels of decentralized power.

The EU institutions (European Commission, European Parliament and Council) are the most important audience. Other target groups include the offices of European regions and towns, European associations, national parliaments, regional parliaments, regions and major cities in the enlarged Europe and the interested citizen. The accredited Brussels press, national and regional media are considered a secondary target.

Underlying the CoR's new communication policy is a two-pronged approach, based on direct communication and "go-between communication", where the CoR acts as a facilitator for dialogue between the EU institutions and local/regional authorities. Focus on members is vital, especially on rapporteurs. There will be more emphasis in the future on a package approach with communication built around a specific event or publication.

As far as media broadcasting and television coverage is concerned the following main events in 2003 have been taken as representative examples:

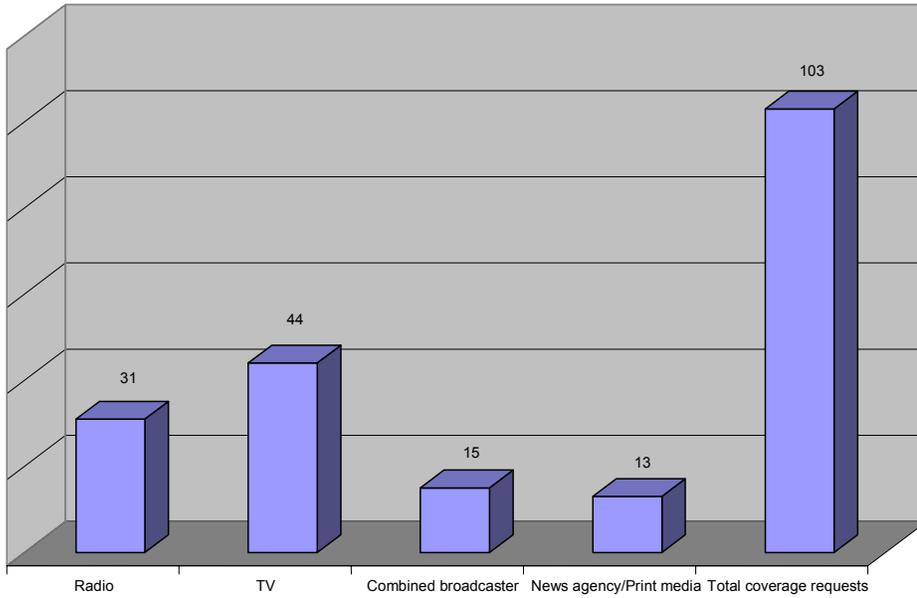
- 49th plenary session on 12-13 February 2003: Romano Prodi and the Mayors of European capitals debate governance (28 major accreditation requests);
- CoR Conference in Leipzig 5-6 May 2003: Europe's cities and regions demand solidarity for the enlarged European Union (23 major accreditation requests);
- 50th plenary session on 2-3 July 2003: First time presence of observers from the ten countries that joined in 2004, Priorities of the Italian Presidency of the EU and the future of structural policy in an enlarged Europe (17 accreditation requests);
- 51st plenary session on 9 October 2003 parallel with the EP: debate on the Opinion for submission to the IGC (22 requests);
- CoR-CLRAE Conference "The devolution agenda: regions and cities matter" on 19 November 2003 (13 requests).

For all these meetings there has been EbS⁷⁶ coverage, EbS provided Eurovision with pictures. Television and Radio are very important media channels⁷⁷.

⁷⁶ Europe by Satellite (EbS) over 600 TV stations are using EbS

⁷⁷ The "combined" column depicts demands from TV and radio broadcasting companies.

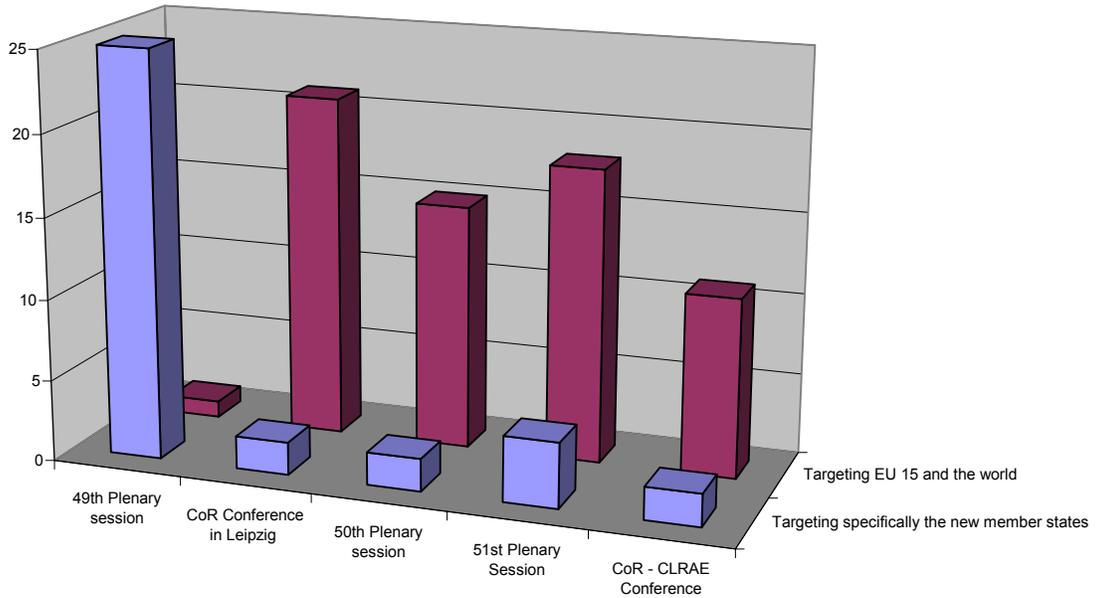
Figure 2: Media Coverage per type of media (accreditation requests)



Source: Committee of the Regions

There is a strong interest of television broadcasting, a demand which should be satisfied by “stories” and “faces” to be added to certain issues.

Figure 3: Coverage of main media events in 2003



Source: Committee of the Regions

It can be seen that there is a considerable interest expressed by the media of the new member states, which bears a potential to be exploited in more depth.

3.8.2 Events

The CoR was involved in organising substantively value-added events in partnership with different tiers of regional and town representation (associations or offices in Brussels), and with the European Commission.

At each of its Brussels plenary sessions, the CoR organised a series of forums on issues linked to its current consultative work.

At each event, around ten regional and town representation offices took part as CoR partners by exhibiting examples of their best practice in the chosen field. This made it possible to assess – using practical examples – the effectiveness of implementing EU policies at regional and town level. Each of the forums ended with a workshop debate, usually involving the European Commission Directorates-General.

Issues addressed in the 2003 forums included: employment, streamlining management of Structural Funds, culture and education, and education through sport.

Open Days

The Committee of the Regions brought together the Brussels offices of ten regional and town representations (Baden-Württemberg Kommunen, Brussels-Capital, Catalonia, Central Italy, the Hungarian regions, Ile-de-France, London, North-West England, Prague, and the Stockholm Region) to take part in the first open days which were held from 7-9 October 2003 in conjunction with the plenary session. Some 1,800 participants visited the various offices over the course of the three days (MEPs, CoR members, representatives of local authorities and civil society, journalists) who took part in 24 seminars, workshops, exhibitions and other meetings mainly on the environment and sustainable development. For the elected representatives of the regions and towns from the countries of the enlarged European Union, these open days also provided an opportunity to assess the importance and influence of the network of the 220 or so Brussels-based local and regional authority representations and the key role the CoR can play at the heart of this network.

3.8.3 Role of the web-based services

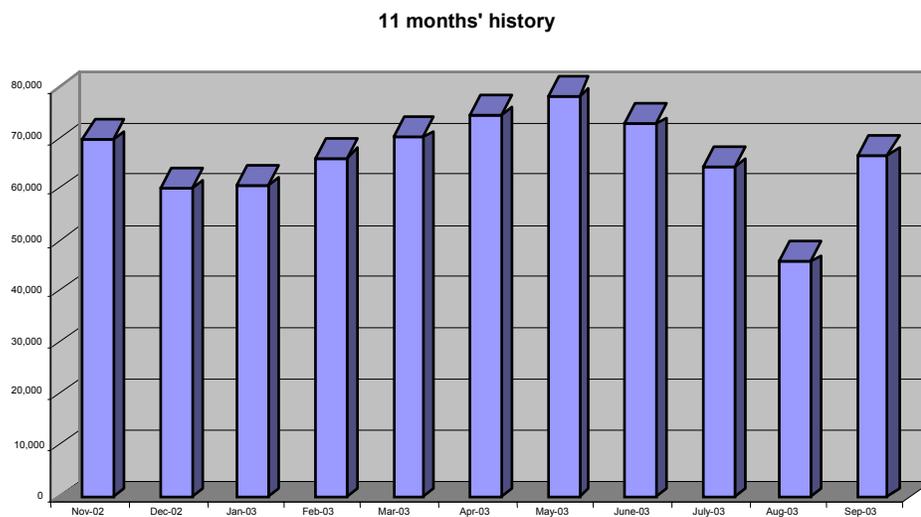
The use of web-based services is ranked in sixth place of information sources as depicted in Table 1 with only 16%. Nevertheless, the interest in the website of the CoR had already significantly increased

since 2002 and is has gradually increased during the last year. One indicator is the **increasing usage**⁷⁸ of the CoR website.

There has been an average monthly total of 66,268 sessions⁷⁹ and an average daily total of 2,222 sessions. One can clearly deduct an increased interested after the re-launch of the CoR website in February 2003.

However, the use of such general web statistics is not a clear-cut indicator of impact. A more detailed monitoring is therefore underway together with an ongoing analysis of the usability of the website, the new software for the monitoring is already operational. Another modification of the site with an increased user-friendliness is expected for autumn 2004.

Figure 4: Average monthly sessions



Source: Committee of the Regions

The appendix provides a more detailed description of the information, which can be deduced from this analysis. Visitors of the site show a high interest in specific persons, a fact supporting the claim to give the CoR more "faces", to combine a communication strategy with a "personalization" of the messages. With the increased monitoring a continuous improvement and targeted approach, as well as a benchmarking with other sites, will be possible.

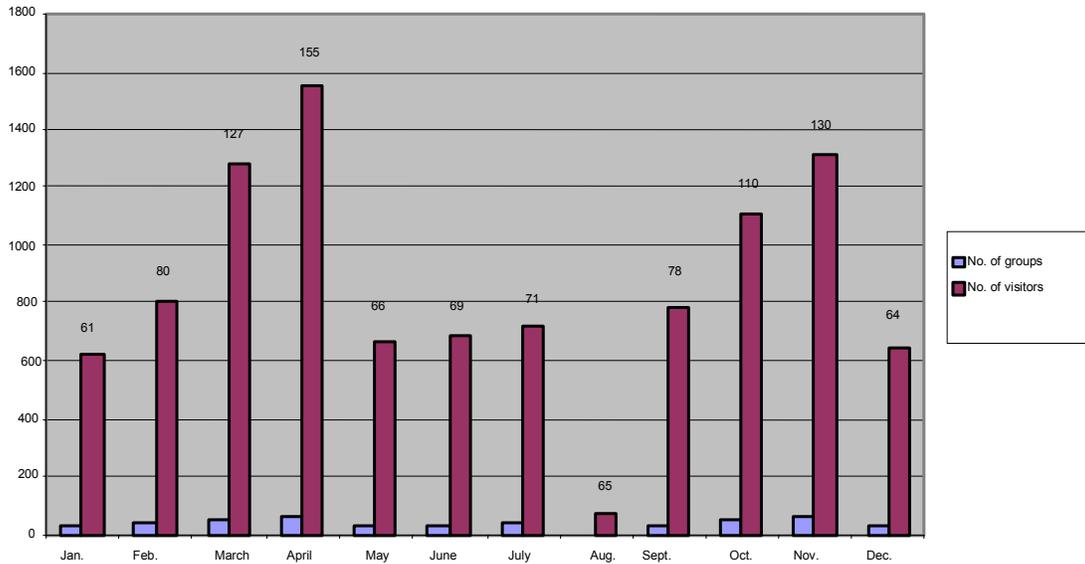
⁷⁸ Usage by session reports individual sessions for any day, week, month or range within recoded Web site history. Sessions are tracked per IP Address and must register at least one hit to be counted.

⁷⁹ A Visitor Session is a session of activity (all hits) for one user of a Web site. A unique user is determined by the IP address or cookie. By default, a visitor session is terminated when a user is inactive for more than 30 minutes.

3.8.4 Visitors to the CoR

The reception of visiting groups is an important instrument to provide a wide array of citizens with first hand information on the CoR and provides the administrators of the secretariats and the other services with the opportunity to receive valuable information and questions for their work. The number of visitors has reached a peak of 10,237 in 454 groups.

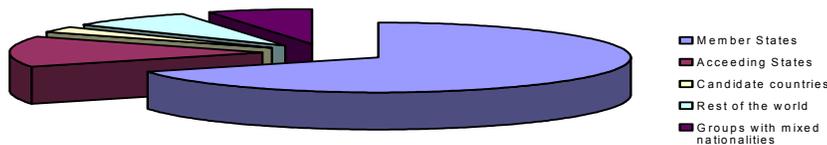
Figure 5: Visitors' numbers



Source: Committee of the Regions

The geographical distribution shows a strong interest of Accessing States in the year preceding the Accession with 14.6 % of all visitors groups. Nevertheless, countries outside of Europe have a percentage of 7.7%⁸⁰.

Figure 6: Geographical distribution of groups

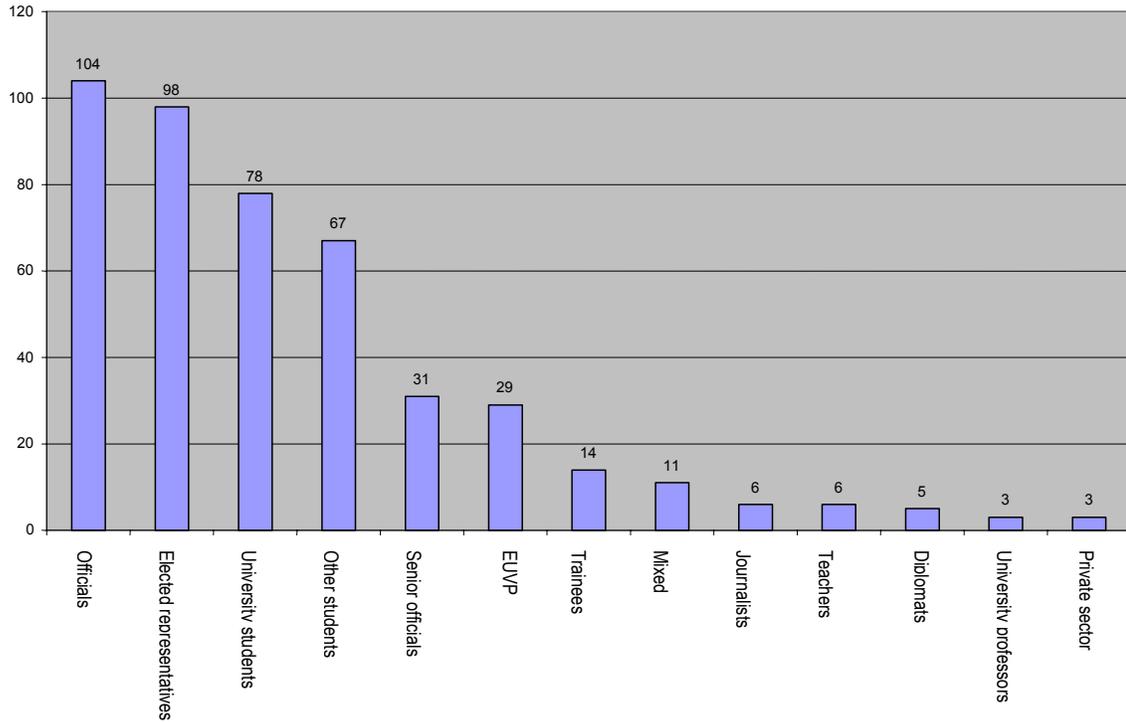


Source: Committee of the Regions

⁸⁰ The number of groups per nationality is given in the appendix.

Most of the groups visiting the CoR are public administration employees or civil servants and elected politicians. Both groups are ideal multipliers for carrying information on European politics and the CoR to the European citizen.

Figure 7: Visitors' categories



Source: Committee of the Regions

4. Conclusions

Strengths

The CoR has succeeded in the year 2003, through its activities, in being recognised in a number of fields as the representation of local and regional authorities in the inter-institutional play. This was achieved through a variety of approaches, by adopting opinions on Commission proposals, the new instruments of outlook reports and by a large number of public discussions, events and participation in the European policy-forming process. In the key areas of cohesion policy and the institutional future of the EU the CoR has succeeded in building up effective cooperation with other EU institutions.

The CoR activities for the future of the EU-cohesion policy helped the Commission in the preparation of the cohesion report and of its proposals for the new structural fund regulations. The added-value provided by the CoR concerned the analysis of the strength and weaknesses of existing regional policy instruments and the timely exchange of view with the regional actors culminating in the Leipzig

conference and a common position paper supported by all the big European associations representing regional and local interests.

Regarding the institutional debate and the influence on the result of the Convention the members did not only stated their position in the plenary debate of the Convention, sent well prepared written contributions, but they also participated in the debate of the political groups in the European Parliament and in some of the national discussions. In addition, activities were coordinated with other actors like the EU-presidency, some representatives of the members states and the big European associations.

The function the CoR acquired in the draft Constitutional Treaty is not only entailing an extended role in the inter-institutional setting in the future but is already now providing it with a bigger scope for action.

Weaknesses

The CoR has been in 2003 more focussed in its activities but this is an area which could still be more developed. An “organizational identity” and a clear political message in its positioning has not always been achieved. The quality of the reports and opinions has been variable reflecting that the expertise used by the rapporteurs for the preparation for the work has not always kept the same high standards. Though this might also be due to the diversity of topics which are of interest for the members, an emphasis on fewer issues should be the guiding principle for future work.

Agenda setting should be performed more proactively and with a longer timeframe. This implies also from an inter-institutional point of view, the stronger involvement of the CoR in the inter-institutional debate and preparation of the annual planning cycle as already pointed out in the policy strategy 2003 and a better synchronization in the legislative planning with the inter-institutional pace. A more systematic follow-up, also involving rapporteurs, would facilitate the strategic processes.

Opportunities

The European citizens are in general still very distant from the EU-institutions. There is an European governance problem concerning a transparent, democratic and efficient cooperation between the different levels of government in the EU. Especially the communication of European policy decisions to national electorates with different political priorities and European concepts is a major challenge.

To continue the progress towards European integration **in a larger Union** requires urgent and credible responses and a concentrated communication effort. It is important that the CoR intensifies its efforts towards the new member countries.

The CoR as the democratically elected representative of the local and regional interests and having played an important role in the convention must take a prominent role in the national debates about the ratification of the draft European Treaty.

To further develop its competences as guardian of the subsidiarity principle could be an important contribution for improved European governance. It is up to the CoR to develop in close cooperation with European, national and regional actors the concept of "active subsidiarity" enabling European progress where needed and improving the capacity to act for local and regional governments.

As far as the consultative work is concerned the CoR has to keep its high profile on cohesion policy. This debate is unavoidably linked to the question of the future financing of the EU.

Close cooperation with the Commission, the EU-presidencies and the European Parliament is needed to influence the final decision-making.

The CoR opinions often address various aspects and approach the policy issues in a more horizontal way than the work division of the commissions and the responsibilities of the various DGs reflect it. The creation of synergies between the Commissions would increase the impact, and the scope of consultative or political activities. One possibility could be to organise joint conferences between Commissions concerning subjects related to "Governance" or "Competitiveness" within the review of the Lisbon Strategy.

Threats

The CoR has to become a trademark; it has to strive for excellence, not only in the quality and the focus of its opinions but also in the service provided to the members and in the financial management. This service mentality requires a cultural change already started with the administrative reform, but also a proper understanding of the political authorities of the CoR about the management rules of a European Institution.

To make this administrative reform a success a continuous effort is needed, exploiting the possibility of change within the existing rules of an European public service and respecting the Cooperation Agreement with the ECESE.

The CoR being confronted with all the administrative and legal obligations of a European institution has an administrative foundation with still substantial weaknesses.

Further progress in the budget negotiations especially with the EP is needed to obtain the human resources necessary to guarantee good management.

Past experiences have shown that decisions on staff policy matters and administrative weaknesses can be exploited to create substantial damage to the reputation of the CoR.

5. **Appendix**

5.1 **The assessment of the CoR's impact**

The task to report on the CoR activities and on how strategic goals were achieved requires a regular monitoring and evaluation cycle, tracking the impacts of the chosen policy and evaluating them on the base of specific given objectives and indicators.

The aim of such a cycle would be the following:

- to increase the impact of the CoR's activities;
- to increase efficiency of the consultative function, inter-institutional placement and the communication function;
- to strengthen the internal policy planning cycle;
- to reach a certain interoperability of methods used in different institutions.

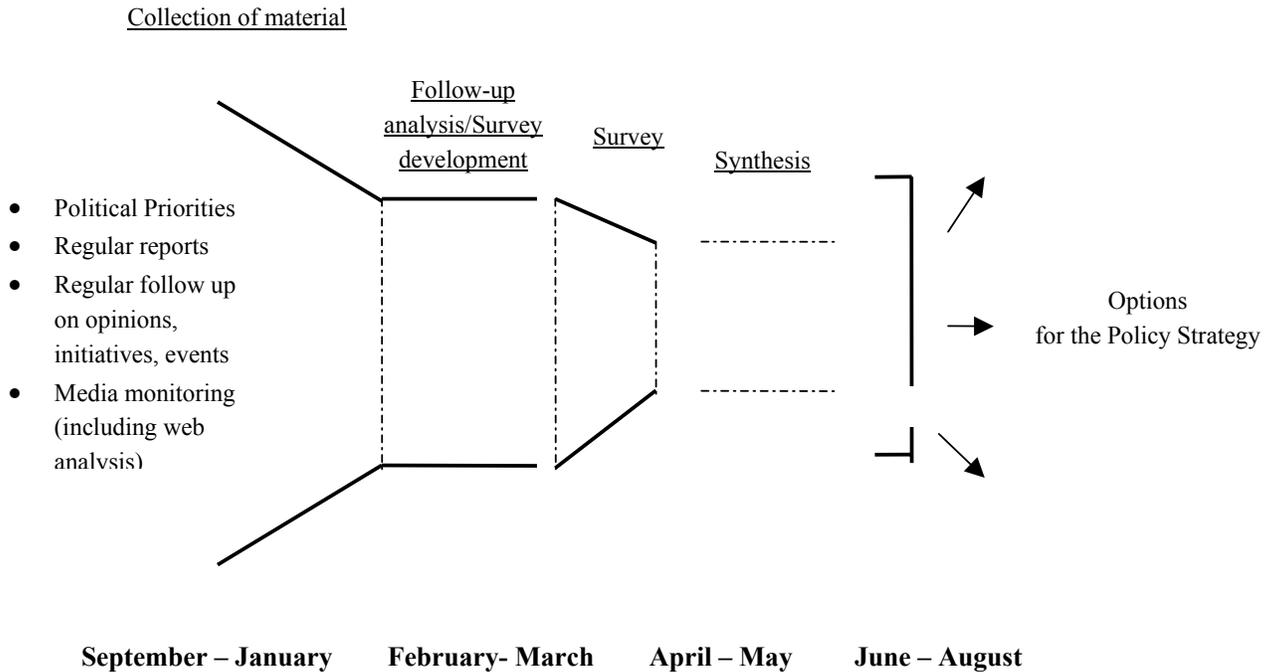
It is proposed to engage in such a cycle for the reporting of 2004.

The typical process cycle would involve the following phases:

1. General goal-setting (bureau, plenary)
2. Choice of policy objectives instruments and activities (bureau, commission)
3. Monitoring and evaluation (on an administrative level)
4. Reporting (impact report discussed by the bureau)

The report is written in summer and regularly presented in September and is the result of an ongoing evaluation and monitoring task in cooperation of the secretariats, the policy unit and various stakeholders contributions.

Figure 8: Policy Analysis Process



Source: Committee of the Regions

A special meeting held on 14 June 2002 in Gijon, Spain, commented on the indicators proposed by the document entitled “Recommendations for the future of the Committee of the Regions”⁸¹. This document recommended the devise of indicators “tailored to the special features of the Committee” for assessing its political and institutional impact, based on its political, institutional and media activity. The following indicators and tools will be specified and further elaborated in a separate document dedicated to the concrete procedure starting with 2004.

Institutional activities

Objective: Represent local and regional interests

- Impact of consultative work: This indicator requires a continuous follow-up of the “exploitation” of an opinion and will be monitored by the Commissions’ secretariats.
- Influence prior to the EU decision-making process: Continuous contacts and development of positions and initiatives leads to pre-legislative influence.
- Influence on the EU’s legislative process: The formal influence is depicted in the report done by the Commission, potentially also by the other institutions. Continuous improvement of these reports with the purpose to support the evaluation of the CoR’s work will be aimed at.

⁸¹ R/CdR 361/2001 item 5 p. 3, “Criteria for gauging the impact of the CoR’s work”

Political activities

Objective: Improve support to members to fulfil their missions

- Support to members by the administration to fulfil their missions: An annual Survey among the members will help to detect further needs and to monitor progress.
- Members' participation in the activities of CoR bodies: A purely quantitative indicator, which should deliver information on the participation.

Objective: Assure relevance and quality of research studies

- External impact and interest in studies: This is a qualitative assessment following a survey and enriched by the judgement of the studies unit.

Information and Communication activities

Objective: Increase and strengthen representation in the media

- Media coverage: One could evaluate the number of press releases – for instance, more than 130 press releases were dispatched in 2001 and 110 in 2002. However, rather than maximizing the output one should target at an efficient measure to impact, i.e. how many of these press releases are taken up. This requires an externally performed analysis effort.
- Readability of press products⁸²: This indicator answers to the question if a press release is straightforward, understandable and free of jargon and if it reflects the CoR's key messages and priorities. A regular online survey among the local and regional media would be the appropriate tool.

Objective: Increase the reach and usability of the website

- Traffic statistics: Follow-up with existing web analysis tool in a consistent way provides the required information.
- The CoR disposes already of a number of assessment tools which have to be used systematically. Two main monitoring activities should be added to these existing tools.
- A major task would be the development of an annual survey among the members.
- Moreover, it would be the continuous task of the commission secretariats to consistently collect information to demonstrate the achievement of certain political objectives in a qualitative or quantitative way. This would also mean to engage the members in the follow-up work and in the “exploitation” of the consultative work. The essential tool will be a follow-up form and a short electronic questionnaire for all the activities, contacts etc.

⁸² This indicator could be used for all published products of the CoR.

A follow-up should be performed and adapted to each category on a regular basis for:

- Events
- Visitors
- Contacts with the institutions

5.2 Analysis of web statistics

This new tool has resulted in a lot of information on the use of the CoR website. Some indications are given here – though recorded and analysed only in 2004 - because they provide information for future use of the web:

a) Profile of site users

In Europe - Belgium, France, Italy and Germany (between 2000 and 3000 sessions a month) have the most active visitors of the CoR website, then Poland, the Netherlands, United Kingdom and Spain (between 700 and 1500 sessions).

b) Types of visits

An average session takes only approximately 4 minutes. This means that the information interest of the visitors has to be satisfied already at a very high level of the site⁸³.

c) Information interest

The most popular pages are:

- the general welcome page,
- recruitment,
- contact us and traineeships,
- presentation pages (role, members).

Popular other pages:

- Press, the pages about exceptional events and new elements
- Exceptional events (Open days, especially searched by French visitors of the site)
- Opinions and plenary sessions

The most frequent downloads concern the **Open Days** with 5% of the total of copies made.

⁸³ Only 7% of the visitors stay 22 minutes on the site. 75% see only 0 to 3 pages, this includes the 46 % of the visitors that only see 1 page.

5.3 Statistics

Table 2: Nationalities of the rapporteurs, from March 2002 to April 2004.

Nationality	Number of opinions adopted	% of all opinions
UK	29	20
I	23	16
D	16	11
F	13	9
FI	11	8
E	11	8
S	9	6
NL	8	6
IRL	8	6
DK	7	5
B	5	3
EL	2	1
L	1	1
P	1	1
Total	144	100
Total of opinions	144	

Table 3: Nationalities of visitors in 2003

Nationalities	Number of groups	Percentage
Germany	73	16.1
France	59	13.0
Italy	52	11.5
Poland	36	7.9
Mixed nationalities	30	6.6
Denmark	26	5.7
United Kingdom	21	4.6
Netherlands	18	4.0
Spain	16	3.5
Sweden	12	2.6
Finland	11	2.4
Hungary	9	2.0
Ireland	8	1.8
Austria	7	1.5
Norway	7	1.5
United States	7	1.5
Estonia	6	1.3
Belgium	5	1.1
Latvia	4	0.9
Turkey	4	0.9
Romania	4	0.9
Cyprus	3	0.7
Switzerland	3	0.7
Portugal	2	0.4
Baltic States	2	0.4
Bulgaria	2	0.4
Czech Republic	2	0.4
Lithuania	2	0.4
Pakistan	2	0.4
Brazil	2	0.4
Russia	2	0.4
Malta	1	0.2
Albania	1	0.2
Argentina	1	0.2
Asian countries	1	0.2
Australia	1	0.2
Chile	1	0.2
China	1	0.2
Colombia	1	0.2
Costa Rica	1	0.2
Hong-Kong	1	0.2
India	1	0.2
Iceland	1	0.2
Kazakhstan	1	0.2
Nepal	1	0.2
Nicaragua	1	0.2
Vietnam	1	0.2
Macedonia	1	0.2
Grand Total	454	100.0

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