

Editorial



The EU Committee of the Regions' role as the voice of local and regional authorities continued to gain prestige and influence throughout the last mandate, from 2010-2015. The members of the EPP Group have significantly contributed to this development with their passion and commitment. Many members of our group held important positions within the CoR and our rapporteurs have produced valuable opinions. I would like to express my heartfelt thanks for this commitment whilst holding political office in Europe's regions and municipalities at the same time.

For this sixth political term, we can and must build on our achievements. Our new EPP colleagues are also very welcome! Through its members, the European Committee of the Regions clearly demonstrates the wonderful diversity of the European Union. More than in any other EU institution, we promote unity in diversity and cooperation based on our common values. We will have to become even more unified to respond to those who are determined to challenge our unity.

Michael Schneider,
President of the EPP Group
in the CoR

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- 11-12 February 2015
Constitutive Plenary Session
Brussels

2015 - 2020: A new CoR mandate, but not a new start from scratch

Throughout the previous mandates, the EPP Group in the Committee of the Regions has

been pleased to count on good cooperation with the EPP Group in the European Parliament,

the European Commission, the European Council and the European People's Party. These

collaborations will be essential for the next mandate and for all those to come.

Europe can tackle global poverty by offering aid matched to the needs of local communities

The President of the European Committee of the Regions, **Michel Lebrun**, joined EU leaders, including President of the European Commission, **Jean-Claude Juncker**, and the Prime Minister of Latvia, **Laimdota Straujuma**, for the launch of the

European Year for Development in Riga, Latvia on 9 January. During his speech he stressed the importance of local and regional government for raising awareness of the importance of development aid and for making it more efficient and effective. [CONTINUED ON PAGE 2](#)



The next steps for Europe's most ambitious investment package



The European Commission adopted the legislative proposal to establish the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) on 13 January. The proposal also sets up a European Investment Advisory Hub to help with project identification, preparation and development as well as a European Investment Project Pipeline, which will improve investors' knowledge of existing and future projects.

The EPP Group in the Committee of the Regions believes that this broader application of the 'investment clause' will significantly help mobilise national and regional investment and facilitate the full implementation of growth-enhancing measures, including EU regional policy programmes. [CONTINUED ON PAGE 4](#)

The EPP believes in people

Joseph Daul, President of the EPP, joined **Michael Schneider**, President of the EPP Group in the CoR, for a discussion on the European Parliament election communication activities as part of the Winter University, which took place in Brussels on 10-11 December. Addressing journalists and media experts, President Daul welcomed the Spitzenkandidaten process and suggested it will continue for the next European

elections in 2019 Under the slogan "Believe in People", the meeting followed on from the EPP pre-election campaign and aimed to put people's abilities and aspirations at the centre of political storytelling. [CONTINUED ON PAGE 2](#)



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MEMBERS ON THE FIELD

■ Boosting the single market through geographical protection



The European Commission is examining the possibility to extend geographical indication protection for non-agricultural products. Following a public consultation, **Marialuisa Coppola** was invited to share the CoR's views at a conference in Brussels on 19 January 2015. She underlined that the extension for non-agricultural products could benefit both producers and consumers, if properly implemented by public institutions. "European social and cultural heritage is protected by the development of craftsmanship and industrial historically present in the different EU regions" she said.

■ Implementing the charter of fundamental rights



Marking the fifth anniversary of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union as a

■ Forging greater cooperation with regions bordering the Mediterranean



Gathering in Antalya, Turkey, local and regional leaders and representatives from the European Union and its Mediterranean partners called for a new momentum in the European Neighbourhood Policy. Taking part in the 6th plenary session of the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM) on 14 December, they stressed the importance of stronger cooperation and closer involvement of regions and cities from the three shores of the Mediterranean. President of the Committee of the Regions and ARLEM co-chair **Michel Lebrun** offered support for the European

binding document, the European Commission held a conference on 17-18 December focussed on assessing and responding to the training needs of legal practitioners and public officials. **Luc Van den Brande** chaired one of the sessions, which specifically looked at the needs and best practices at the local level in his capacity as rapporteur on the topic. "Local and regional authorities are central to implementing European rules on fundamental rights" he reminded participants.

■ Strengthened relations with the European Commission

President Michel Lebrun has been active over the Christmas and New Year period with many bilateral meetings and delivering speeches. On 9 December, he met with Commissioner Timmermans, 1st Vice President of the European Commission with responsibility for inter-institutional relations, to discuss ways to deepen cooperation with the new European Commission team.

■ Promoting decentralised EU communication

On 23 January, President Lebrun took part in the third in a series of citizens' dialogues in the Spanish city of Santander. Co-organised with the Spanish association of municipalities and provinces (FEMP), it was an occasion to gathering input and feedback on EU initiatives, such as the European Structural and Investment Funds, from citizens.

Commission's review of the European Neighbourhood Policy: "We can identify several good examples for designing macro-regional synergies in the Mediterranean and for implementing instruments devoted to economic, social and territorial development" he said. The assembly also underlined that the EU must continue to support countries to the south and east of the Mediterranean towards a prosperous and peaceful future. **György Gémesi**, **Dimitrios Kalogeropoulos**, **Jacques Blanc**, **Alin Adrian Nica**, **Peter Bonello** and **Eleni Loukaidou** also took part in the plenary session.

2015: SETTING THE CONTEXT ALONGSIDE EU INSTITUTIONS

Latvian Presidency: Competitive Europe, Digital Europe, Engaged Europe



"The EU needs to find the best ways to promote growth, to fully exploit the potential of the emerging digital economy and engage actively in world affairs. That cannot be done without investment in crucial infrastructure and without a continued commitment to reforms aimed at reaching the Europe 2020 strategy goals. However, for decisions to take effect they have to be implemented at the local level, which requires the involvement of local and regional authorities."

Laimdota Straujuma the Prime Minister of Latvia

On 1 January 2015, Latvia took on the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. Under the first priority, a **Competitive Europe**, the Latvian Presidency will focus on the creation of jobs and growth, and strengthening the single market by advancing the Energy Union and industrial competitiveness. The second priority, **Digital Europe**, will focus on the proposal for a Digital Single Market

that is expected at the end of the presidency, as well as the data protection package and telecoms package. Engaged Europe, the last priority, is focused on **Europe's position in the world**. The Eastern Partnership Summit in Riga in May 2015 is the key focus in this regard.

Other priorities include: opening of new chapters in the

Enlargement negotiations, the Ukraine crisis, terrorism and ISIS, ebola, the Middle East, advance on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), conclusion of the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) between Canada and the European Union, Europe's migration policies.

European Year for Development: CoR to focus on hunger, poverty, health & access to water



"2015, the EU Year for Development, marks the transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals. Local and regional authorities have been actively involved in the consultations to define them. But there's still a long way to go. Despite this, many European local and regional authorities and their associations are ready to take up their responsibility towards the global goals: in their own day to day work at home, by mobilising citizens and local groups and institutions, and by providing support to colleagues elsewhere in the world."

Hans J.F.M Janssen, CoR rapporteur on the communication 'A decent life for all: from vision to collective action'



2015 has been dedicated as the European year for development. Speaking at the launch of the year, **Michel Lebrun** outlined three main reasons why the Committee of the Regions strongly supports the ambitions of this year for development:

- local and regional authorities are often the first point of contact when it comes to issues such as hunger, poverty, health or access to water
- European cities and regions heavily contribute to development aid through financial, technical and human resources

■ there is an increasing understanding that global environmental challenges need to be tackled via new approaches and also new players, including the local and regional level.

In order to make it possible for LRAs to play their role in the implementation of development policies, **Hans J.F.M Janssen** proposes an exchange of experience, peer-to-peer capacity building approaches, benchmarking, decentralised co-operation.

“The EU needs to translate its policies and activities into stories that can be accessible for the media and citizens”

Approximately 50 journalists and media experts gathered in Brussels on 10-11 December for the ninth edition of the EPP Group in the Committee of the Regions’ Winter University. Entitled “Putting people back at the heart of EU media and communication”, the meeting focused on creating networks between the European institutions in Brussels, EU member states, cities and local and regional media.

In a debate with EPP President, **Joseph Daul**, participants shared their views on the communication aspects of the European election campaign and the process to appoint Jean-Claude Juncker as President of the European Commission. Welcoming the development, President Daul said: “the politicization of the European campaign through the Spitzenkandidaten procedure helped. It gave a face to the different policy options

and helped make the debate more interesting for citizens and the media”.

This interpretation was shared by the group of journalists and Federico Cheri reported: “This time it was different. You could see the different candidates and the human faces behind the campaign.” However, President Daul and the EPP Group in the Committee of the Regions President, **Michael Schneider**, agreed that having

the best election campaign is not enough. “Our main work must concentrate on communicating about concrete European issues that are closer to citizens and which impact on their lives every day” he said. **Lambert Van Nistelrooij** MEP, echoed this notion in a session dedicated to best practices in communication, putting his electoral success down to continuous “image building”, which translated into trust.

Presenting the EPP Group in the European Parliament’s social media strategy in a debate on the increasingly digital approach to communication, **Lada Jurica** said “We have moved away from saying to showing”. This shift was appreciated by participants who encouraged other EU institutions to learn from this example.



QUOTES FROM EPP FAMILY MEMBERS

Celebrating EPP success in Croatia

“Congratulations to **Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic**, new president of Croatia! By choosing you, your fellow citizens chose a country moving forward!”

Joseph Daul,
President of the European
People’s Party, via
Twitter · Jan 11

Charlie Hebdo: EPP Group in the European Parliament responds

In the wake of the terrorist attacks in Paris, the whole EPP expressed its commitment to freedom of speech and the media. Speaking at the European Parliament Plenary Session, **Manfred Weber**, Chairman of the EPP Group, said:

“We need to draw lessons from the Paris terrorist attacks with clear political measures. This has to start with a closer cooperation of national authorities, of intelligence services... We call on socialist and liberal MEPs to stop blocking the text on EU Passenger Name Records and open the door to an agreement. It is better to have a single EU PNR system with high data protection standards as soon as possible than different PNR systems in each Member State”

Latvian Presidency notes cohesion policy crucial for recovery

“An economic recovery should go hand in hand with increased competitiveness and more jobs in the whole EU... it will be of utmost importance to start implementing cohesion policy instruments in 2015 as the main drivers for investment and for strengthening economic, social and territorial cohesion in Europe.”

Jānis Reirs, Latvian Minister for Finance

Team Juncker thanks CoR for support

“Thanks President **Lebrun** for endorsing the EU Investment Plan”

Jyrki Katainen, European
Commission Vice President
responsible for Jobs, Growth,
Investment & Competitiveness,
via Twitter · Jan 14

European Strategic Investment Fund: the next steps



Following a proposal from the European Commission, Europe's leaders called for a European Fund for Strategic Investment to be set up as a matter of urgency at the first European Council chaired by President Donald

Tusk on 18 December. The European Commission adopted the legislative proposal for the European Fund for Strategic Investments, which will be established in close partnership with the European Investment Bank, on

13 January with the objective to foster growth and speed the economic recovery in Europe. It is now due to be discussed between Parliament and Council and the Committee of the Regions will also issue an opinion on the subject. The President of the EPP Group in the Committee of the Regions, **Michael Schneider**, welcomed the European Council's support for the creation of the European Fund for Strategic Investment (EFSI): and the investment plan as a whole, which explicitly mentions the role regional authorities should play, not only in **identifying, supporting or managing the investment projects**, but also in the two other strands of the Plan: **making finance reach the real economy** and **improving the investment environment**.

Giving young people a voice



The Committee of the Regions aims to help unfurl some of the key questions being raised by young people in Europe's cities and regions by putting youth at the centre of the debate. On 5th February, young people, CoR members and EU decision makers from across Europe will gather for the YFactor conference to debate topics such as Youth [Un]employment, EU Citizenship and Sustainable Development and Growth. The aim is to present the main conclusions to the new European Commission President, **Jean-Claude Juncker**.

To register visit:
cor.europa.eu/yfatorfacebook.com/yfactor
 #yfactor

Do you live in Europe's most entrepreneurial city or region?

The Committee of the Regions has launched the 2016 edition of the European Entrepreneurial Region (EER) Award. Any EU region or city, regardless of their size or wealth, with outstanding, future-oriented entrepreneurial strategies can apply via the CoR website until 16 March 2015.

#EER2016

The European Commission proposal includes several elements:

- **A European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI):** the main channel to mobilise at least €315 billion in additional investment in the real economy over the next three years.
- **Member States' Participation** and favourable treatment for national contributions to the EFSI under the Stability and Growth Pact
- **A European Investment Advisory Hub** offering advice and assistance
- **A European Project Pipeline**, which will inform investors about available existing and potential future projects.
- **An EU Guarantee Fund** (€8 billion by 2020), which will provide a liquidity cushion for the Union budget against potential losses incurred by the EFSI when supporting projects.

EFSI will be governed by a Steering Board, which will decide on the overall orientation, the investment guidelines, the risk profile, strategic policies and asset allocation of the Fund, in line with the Commission's Political Guidelines. An Investment Committee will also be set up, which is accountable to the Steering Board and will be responsible for vetting specific projects to decide which will receive EFSI support.

ONGOING OPINIONS

COMISSION	OPINION	RAPPOREUR	EXPECTED ADOPTION
CIVEX	Multilevel protection of the rule of law and EU fundamental rights	Luc Van den Brande, Flemish-European Liaison Agency Chairman (Belgium)	February 2015
CIVEX	Goals for the post-2015 Development Agenda	J.F.M. (Hans) Janssen, Mayor of Oisterwijk (Netherlands)	April 2015
CIVEX	Enlargement strategy and main challenges 2014-2015	Franz Schausberger, CoR Delegate of the region of Salzburg (Austria)	April 2015
ECOS	EU strategic framework for health and safety at work 2014-2020	Mauro D'Attis, Municipal Councillor of Brindisi (Italy)	February 2015
ECOS	EU Geographical indication protection for non-agricultural products	Mauro D'Attis, Municipal Councillor of Brindisi (Italy)	February 2015
ENVE	Resource efficiency opportunities in the building sector	Csaba Borboly, President of Harghita County Council (Romania)	April 2015
EDUC	Towards an integrated approach to cultural heritage for Europe	tbc	April 2015

Secretary General: Heinz-Peter Knapp | Editor in chief: Kathryn Owens, kathryn.owens@cor.europa.eu, +32 2 282 2400 | Press Officer: Dominik Krakowiak

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