

EUROPEAN UNION



Committee of the Regions

A political forum

1994–2004

Consultative work
Members' attendance

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Preface

Since its first inaugural meeting in March 1994, the Committee of the Regions has assumed the responsibility of acting as the mouthpiece of the regions, towns and local authorities, through their political representatives, in the Community decision-making process.

The establishment of the Committee represented an important step towards the fulfilment of the goal set down in the preamble to the Treaty on European Union 'to continue the process of creating an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe, in which decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizen in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity'.

Over the past 10 years, the Committee of the Regions' plenary sessions and commission meetings have been attended by many who seek to promote the Committee's objectives. The Committee is a physical entity that directly links the European institutions to the regions, towns and municipalities of the European Union. It is also an important tool for economic and social cohesion between Member States and its subnational components, the regions and other local authorities.

Ten years on, the Committee of the Regions has succeeded in strengthening its position in the decision-making process. The European Constitution makes provision for the principle of local and regional self-government and confers upon the Committee an important role in monitoring the principle of subsidiarity.

Nevertheless, the Committee of the Regions does not yet have the rank of institution. It is not as yet sufficiently involved in the EU's legislative work, nor does it have the right to submit verbal or written questions to the European Commission.

During the past 10 years, the Committee of the Regions has demonstrated that it is able to help strengthen the legislative process by involving the local and regional authorities, which are, after all, responsible for the implementation of 70 % of Community legislation.

Together, we shall continue to work towards strengthening regional and local dimension.

Peter Straub

President of the Committee of the Regions



CoR in brief

- CoR in 1994: 189 members and alternates from the 12 Member States
- CoR after the enlargement of 1 January 1995: 222 members and 222 alternates from the 15 Member States
- CoR from 1 May 2004: 317 members and 317 alternates from the 25 Member States
- Four political groups
- Thematic commissions that prepare the work of the plenary session (currently six).

Areas of consultation

- | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| ✓ Economic and social cohesion | ✓ Employment |
| ✓ Education and youth | ✓ Social affairs |
| ✓ Culture | ✓ Environment |
| ✓ Public health | ✓ European Social Fund |
| ✓ Trans-European networks | ✓ Vocational training |
| ✓ Transport | |

Effects of consultation

- | | | | | |
|------------|---------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------|
| × Opinions | × Resolutions | × Outlook reports | × Impact reports | × Studies |
|------------|---------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------|





Timeline

- 1992** Maastricht Treaty — creation of the CoR
- 1994** First plenary session in Brussels
- 1997** Treaty of Amsterdam — CoR strengthened
- 2001** Treaty of Nice: members of the CoR must hold a local authority electoral mandate or be politically accountable to an elected regional or local assembly
- 2001** Laeken European Council — the CoR is represented by six observers at the Convention on the Future of Europe

The Presidents of the CoR

- 1994–1996** **Jacques Blanc** (FR/EPP) President of Languedoc-Roussillon Regional Council
- 1996–1998** **Pasqual Maragall I Mira** (ES/PES) Alcalde del Ayuntamiento de Barcelona
- 1998–2000** **Manfred Dammeyer** (DE/PES) Minister für Bundes- und Europaangelegenheiten des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen
- 2000–2002** **Jos Chabert** (BE/EPP) Ministre des Travaux Publics, du Transport, et de la Politique de Santé du gouvernement de la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale
- 2002–2004** **Albert Bore** (UK/PES) Leader of Birmingham City Council
- 2004–2006** **Peter Straub** (DE/EPP) Präsident des Landtages von Baden-Württemberg



1994

Council Presidency Greece/Germany



EVENTS

- ✓ Phase two of economic and monetary union (EMU) and creation of the European Monetary Institute (EMI)
- ✓ Entry into force of the agreement creating the European Economic Area (EEA)
- ✓ 9 and 10 March — inaugural session of the Committee of the Regions; **Jacques Blanc** elected president
- ✓ Conclusion of negotiations with Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden in Brussels
- ✓ Fourth election by direct universal suffrage of the European Parliament
- ✓ **Jacques Santer** succeeds **Jacques Delors** at the head of the European Commission



Jacques Delors



The CoR: a political forum

Guest speakers at plenary sessions

During the plenary sessions in the years 1994–2004, the Committee of the Regions has been honoured to welcome and debate with important politicians, and has thus fulfilled one of its original callings: to become a real political forum serving the citizens of the European Union.

1994

1. 9–10 March:

Mr DELORS, *President of the European Commission*

‘European integration can no longer be taken for granted. It can continue only with more determination, more concrete successes and greater participation by citizens. The Committee of the Regions will be a unique body on the political scene, by virtue of its tremendously diverse makeup. It will be able to exercise a very special kind of power based on expertise and influence.’

President Delors went on to say that the Committee of the Regions has a heavy responsibility: firstly, to increase citizens’ sense of belonging to the Union, and secondly, to warn the Community institutions about the risks of any kind of slippage.

Mr TSOHATZOPOULOS, *Presidency in office of the Council*

‘At last, a few months after the Treaty on European Union entered into force, the Committee of the Regions has become a reality. I am delighted, in my capacity as President of the Council of the European Union, to be able to take part in this inaugural session today. From the start, the Greek Presidency has shown a special interest in this project, and it is natural that this presidency should be celebrating on this day, when the efforts have paid off and the circle has been completed by the official creation of the Committee of the Regions. (...)’

‘The creation of the Committee of the Regions is an important political step. Alongside the European Parliament, it symbolises European citizenship and is the embodiment of the principle of subsidiarity, and thus an additional institutional means of reducing the democratic deficit.’



Mr KLEPSCH, *President of the European Parliament*

‘The Committee of the Regions, which stands at the crossroads where the European and national institutions meet with the citizens, will from now on allow the peoples of Europe to make their voice heard in the Union in a formal, official manner at every level of the democratic system. The Committee of the Regions thus helps to broaden the Union’s democratic base.’

2. 5–6 April:

Mr SCHMIDHUBER, *member of the European Commission*

‘Today’s meeting marks the start of real work for the Committee of the Regions. I would like to thank you for inviting me to attend this first ‘working meeting’. I would also like to take this opportunity to wish the Committee of the Regions every success in its future work. I hope that the presentation of regional concerns and the specific interests of citizens will be a valuable and indispensable component of European integration policy.’

3. 17–18 May:

Mr DELORS, *President of the European Commission*

‘Over the coming years, the countries of Europe will have to overcome challenges, most of them caused by history and the international environment, and not by European integration. Even for those who have no European ideals, European integration can at the very least be the means that enables each European country to adapt to what experts call ‘economic globalisation.’

4. 27–28 September:

Mr MILLAN, *member of the European Commission responsible for regional development*

‘In my capacity of Commissioner in charge of relations with the Committee of the Regions, I am very pleased to be able to address your Committee for the first time.’

‘I have always believed in the need to give a voice to regions and local authorities in the decision mechanism process of the Union. The creation of your Committee is an important first step and the Commission looks forward to working with you in the coming months and years.’



5. 15–16 November:

Mr LANDÁBURU, *Director-General DG XVI*

‘The creation of the Committee of the Regions is an important step towards a gradual reduction of the European Union’s democratic deficit; its members have the potential to become the principal players in launching the policy of economic and social cohesion. In this way, we draw ever closer to the citizens and can give them a clearer, more concrete image of Europe.’

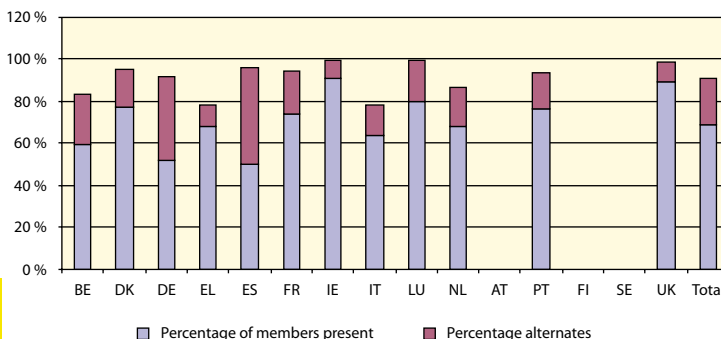
Consultative work

In the course of its plenary sessions in 1994, the Committee of the Regions adopted **21 referral opinions and six own-initiative opinions**, making a total of **27 documents**.

Members’ attendance

No	Dates	Members’ attendance	Total number of members
1	9–10 March 1994	170 members 133 alternates	303
2	5–6 April 1994	140 members 57 alternates	197
3	17–18 May 1994	112 members 54 alternates	166
4	27–29 September 1994	113 members 50 alternates	163
5	15–16 November 1994	117 members 42 alternates	159

Members’ attendance by country



1995

Council Presidency France/Spain



EVENTS

- ✓ Official accession of Austria, Finland and Sweden to the European Union
- ✓ Appointment of members of the Commission for a five-year term
- ✓ Entry into force of the Schengen Agreement (phasing out of controls at shared borders and introduction of a regime of free movement of persons)



Jacques Santer Commission



Jacques Santer



The CoR: a political forum

Guest speakers at plenary sessions

1995

6. 1–2 February:

Ms WULF-MATHIES, *member of the European Commission responsible for regional policy, relations with the CoR and the Cohesion Fund*

‘I am convinced that European policies, in particular regional policy, need to be better rooted in the cities and regions, and we need to speak to people above all in those places where their interests lie. We need our policies constantly to engage with citizens, which is why the existence of the Committee of the Regions is a good thing.’

Mr SPECIALE, *chairman of the European Parliament Committee on Regional Policy*

‘A place is reserved for you at our committee meetings, and we make a commitment to make all our documentation available to you.’

Representatives of new countries joining the European Union

Mr PURTSCHER, *chairman of the Austrian delegation*

‘Our wish, as Austrians, is to strengthen the Committee of the Regions in a targeted manner. Thanks to its existence as an official body, the regions already have a foot in the door. The Maastricht Treaty has already given subsidiarity the status of a structural principle in the future European Union. Our common goal must be to open the door wide in 1996 in order further to strengthen the opportunities we have to help shape Europe, as I am deeply convinced that if it is to be anything at all, a democratic Europe of citizens must be a Europe of regions that respects the principle of subsidiarity.’

Mr RAHKAMO, *chairman of the Finnish delegation*

‘We Finns need Europe. We have high expectations of cooperation within the EU. We are in favour of creating a network of contacts between eastern and western Europe, we want to develop the Baltic area, and above all, we want our efforts to convince the other countries of the EU that they made the right choice in allowing Finland to join the European Union.’



Mr KALIFF, *chairman of the Swedish delegation*

‘Sweden has joined the European Union, and those of us who are part of Swedish regional and local authorities with decision-making powers intend to work with you in the Committee of the Regions in order to involve citizens as directly and as closely as possible in the EU’s decision-making institutions.’

7. 20–21 April:

Ms WULF-MATHIES, *member of the European Commission responsible for regional policy*

She explained that the European Commission had approved a code of conduct aimed at guiding and strengthening the cooperation between the Commission and the Committee of the Regions.

8. 19–20 July:

Mr HÄNSCH, *President of the European Parliament*

He described the Committee of the Regions as a ‘major political assembly’ and declared, with reference to relations between the Committee of the Regions and the European Parliament, that ‘the European Union needs them both, as we are not competitors, but rather partners with complementary roles’. **Mr Hänsch** therefore believed that the Committee of the Regions’ request to be able to be consulted by the European Parliament was ‘likely to strengthen the links between the two bodies and, at the same time, the consultative power of the Committee of the Regions.’

9. 20–21 September:

Mr SANTER, *President of the European Commission*

‘I know that you are committed, among other things, to reducing the distance between Brussels and our citizens. You are extremely well placed to achieve this. You know the everyday realities of regions, cities and towns. Members of the public tell you about their hopes and fears. Your knowledge and your experience enrich the debate within the Community. As you are now involved in drawing up Community policies, you are, I am sure, better able to explain them and help people understand them.’

Ms WULF-MATHIES, *member of the European Commission responsible for regional policy*

‘In the light of what has just been said, I sense that I am in good company in this forum. As early as the beginning of February, the Committee of the Regions asked in its opinion that social and regional aspects of the information society be taken into account, and emphasised that the development of new technologies gives rise not only to hopes, but also to fears of the unknown. However, the aim of politics is



to fight fears about information and to ensure that people have equal opportunities to use it in a balanced way.'

'Moreover, the principal objective of regional policy is to prevent a two-speed telecommunications society from coming about. In its opinion on the European Union's action plan on the information society, the Committee of the Regions emphasised that guaranteed access for all to universal services was a key element in social cohesion.'

10. 15–16 November:

Mr WESTENDORP, *Chairman of the IGC reflection group*

'I am here because I am well aware of the importance of this body in the institutional mechanism of the European Union. You represent the interests of local authorities, which are essential to making European integration a reality in the lives of our peoples. The Committee of the Regions embodies closeness to the citizen.'



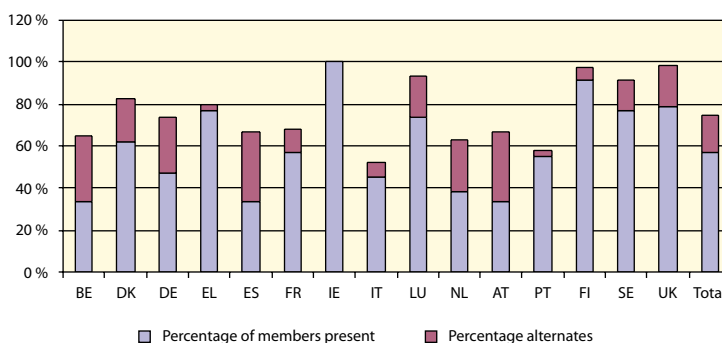
Consultative work

In the course of its plenary sessions in **1995**, the Committee of the Regions adopted **12 referral opinions** and **26 own-initiative opinions**, making a total of **38 documents**.

Members' attendance

No	Dates	Members' attendance	Total number of members
6	1–2 February 1995	137 members 39 alternates	176
7	20–21 April 1995	126 members 45 alternates	171
8	19–20 July 1995	120 members 45 alternates	165
9	20–21 September 1995	124 members 34 alternates	158
10	15–16 November 1995	132 members 39 alternates	171

Members' attendance by country



1996

Council Presidency Italy/Ireland



EVENTS

- ✓ Entry into force of the customs union between the EU and Turkey
- ✓ Opening of the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) in Turin to revise the Community treaties
- ✓ European Conference on Rural Development in Cork, Ireland
- ✓ Dublin Council — agreement on procedures for implementing the single currency



IGC in Turin



Dublin Council



The CoR: a political forum

Guest speakers at plenary sessions

1996

11. 17–18 January:

Mr CHERNOFF, *President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities*

He advocated closer coordination between the CLRAE and the Committee of the Regions in order better to defend the range of interests of regional and local authorities.

Ms WULF-MATHIES, *member of the European Commission responsible for regional policy*

She expressed the wish that the Committee help ensure that European regional policy serve to improve economic and social cohesion and sustainable development, which would make the Union more attractive. However, she believed that it was primarily the role of regional and local authorities to implement programmes, with due respect for the environment.

Mr CAVALCHINI, *Italy's permanent representative to the European Communities*

He highlighted the importance of strengthening the concept of European citizenship, adding that this was an area where the Committee had an important role to play by bringing the citizen closer to the European institutions.

12. 21–22 March:

Mr SPECIALE, *chairman of the European Parliament Committee on Regional Policy*

He congratulated the Committee of the Regions for its initiatives and its work and encouraged it to work towards shared aims, such as creating a more transparent and more democratic European Union that was closer to its people. This, he said, should be a major shared aim of the European Parliament, the regions, local authorities, and the whole of the European Union.

Mr VERDE I ALDEA, *Vice-President of the European Parliament*

He made clear his conviction that both the Committee of the Regions and the European Parliament wanted the European Union to move forward and expand, and that this was the spirit in which they needed to work.



Mr MORÁN, *chairman of the European Parliament's Institutional Affairs Committee*

He said that the institutional affairs committee of the Parliament gave particular attention to the Committee of the Regions, because it was aware that the gulf between citizens and the institutions was narrowing thanks to the closer and more flexible relations enjoyed by the regional, local and Community levels. He added that subsidiarity was beyond doubt a positive concept for the life of the Community, and that this principle should be applied at sub-State level.

13. 12–13 June:

Mr FASSINO, *State Secretary responsible for external affairs in the Italian government*

With respect to employment, he indicated that a fundamental part of strengthening all forms of dialogue between social partners and governments lay in subsidiarity.

Mr FISCHLER, *member of the European Commission responsible for agriculture and rural development*

He hoped for fruitful cooperation with the Committee of the Regions, as agriculture affects every region of Europe, and the Common Agricultural Policy needed to take the diversity of the European Union into account.

Mr SANTER, *President of the European Commission*

He welcomed the report on territorial employment pacts adopted by the Assembly; he was expecting very active support from the Committee of the Regions, as its experience enriched the debates on Community policies and helped people at the grass roots to understand them, thus bringing the European Union closer to its citizens.

Baroness WILLIAMS, *former British Minister for Employment; Leader of the Liberal Democrats in the House of Lords*

She added, on this subject, that local and regional authorities could help create jobs at lower cost than could national governments, thanks to their practical local knowledge.

14. 18–19 September:

Mr DELORS, *former President of the European Commission*

He emphasised that regions and local authorities had a key role to play in enabling a new model of development to emerge because, more often than not, regional leaders had a better understanding of the constraints to and opportunities for development than did the national level.



Mr MITCHELL, *Irish Minister for European Affairs*

‘It has been through working together that a Union has been created that is greater than the sum of its parts. We should not rest on our laurels, but continue the process towards a more effective Europe, one that works for all.’

Ms VEIL, *former President of the European Parliament*

She stressed the importance of the towns and regions in taking practical steps to promote equal opportunities between men and women; it was necessary to have local knowledge of situations that can vary greatly.

15. 14–15 November:

Ms WULF-MATHIES, *member of the European Commission responsible for regional policy*

‘On 6 November the Commission approved the Cohesion Report. I am pleased to be able to present the report for the first time to the Committee of the Regions just a few days after the Commission’s decision.’



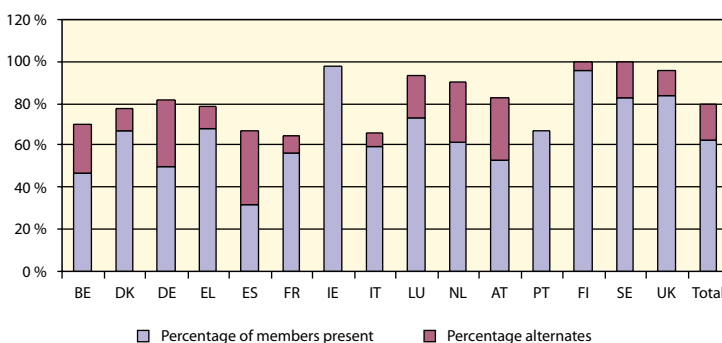
Consultative work

In the course of its plenary sessions in **1996**, the Committee of the Regions adopted **25 referral opinions**, **18 own-initiative opinions**, and **four other documents** (declarations, resolutions, memoranda, etc.), making a total of **47 documents**.

Members' attendance

No	Dates	Members' attendance	Total number of members
11	17–18 January 1996	129 members 42 alternates	171
12	21–22 March 1996	160 members 40 alternates	200
13	12–13 June 1996	137 members 32 alternates	169
14	18–19 September 1996	137 members 42 alternates	179
15	14–15 November 1996	137 members 37 alternates	174

Members' attendance by country



1997

Council Presidency Netherlands/Luxembourg



EVENTS

- ✓ 40th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome
- ✓ European Council in Amsterdam — consensus on a draft treaty
- ✓ Presentation of 'Agenda 2000' by the European Commission
- ✓ Extraordinary council of the Western European Union (WEU) — declaration on its role and its relations with the European Union
- ✓ Signing of the Amsterdam Treaty
- ✓ International Conference on Climate Change in Kyoto



Treaty of Amsterdam



The CoR: a political forum

Guest speakers at plenary sessions

1997

16. 15–16 January:

Mr SAMPAIO, *President of the Republic of Portugal and former member of the CoR*

‘I am particularly pleased and moved to be addressing this distinguished Assembly today. Besides appreciating the Committee of the Regions’ important work in the European integration process and in deepening the Union and securing the support of its citizens, I am linked to this Assembly by special ties and memories of a recent past that cannot be erased by my new duties.(...)’

‘The time when I worked in this Committee and the fact (of which I am proud) that I was a member of its first Bureau, have left their indelible mark on me and convinced me of the vital added value that its actions can and are giving to the efficacy of this shared project.’

Mr FISCHLER, *member of the European Commission responsible for agriculture and rural development*

He expressed concern at the rural exodus, which, regrettably, was continuing in the Member States. Some 500 programmes to promote rural areas were currently in existence; among other things, these aimed to support the economic diversification of these areas. He welcomed the convergence he had noticed between the work of the Commission’s services and those of the Committee of the Regions, which had drawn up several opinions on rural development.

Mr OREJA, *member of the European Commission responsible for institutional matters, preparations for the IGC and information*

He wanted to involve the Committee of the Regions in the information campaign on new communication technologies launched by the European Commission, stressing that keeping the public informed was the very foundation of European democracy.



17. 12–13 March:

Mr DEHAENE, the Belgian Prime Minister, who had been invited to this plenary session, was not able to attend due to other commitments

A video produced by the Press Office on the Committee of the Regions was shown before the opinions were discussed. An item was also added to the agenda to allow for a debate on the involvement of members of the Committee of the Regions in the Summit of Regions and Cities of the European Union that was to take place in Rotterdam on 15 and 16 May 1997.

The draft estimates of the Committee's expenditure and revenue for the 1998 financial year, which had already provoked lively debate at the Bureau meeting the previous day, were amended and adopted.

18. 11–12 June:

Ms WULF-MATHIES, *member of the European Commission responsible for regional policy*

She noted that the development of conurbations depended on an integrated approach to the various policies (social, economic and cultural) aimed at promoting them. She added that it would be helpful for the different players at local, regional, national and European levels to take coordinated steps. The Commission would like to have a more in-depth debate on the future of cities and to involve the Committee of the Regions heavily in this.

19. 17–18 September:

Mr SAMARANCH, *President of the International Olympic Committee*

'On behalf of the Olympic movement, I wish to congratulate the organisers of this forum for having dedicated a plenary session to the important role of sports in the strengthening of identity and development of regions and cities in Europe.'

He also welcomed the recognition of the social significance of sport by the draft Amsterdam Treaty, in particular its role in forging identity and bringing people together. He commented that it was to Europe, with its resources and the diversity of its states and regions, that we owe some of the greatest cultural, artistic, philosophical, scientific and political movements in the history of humanity.



20. 19–20 November:

Mr GISCARD D'ESTAING, *President of the CEMR, former President of France and member of the CoR*

'It is clear, first of all, that we do at present need to introduce a more satisfactory form of partnership between area authorities, the Commission and the Member States. This partnership already works but there is no doubt that it could be improved. To give an example, such partnership could come into play at an earlier stage, i.e. not only when it comes to implementing projects but also at the earlier stage, i.e. at the programming and negotiation stages.'

Mr SANTER, *President of the European Commission*

'At a time when we are embarking on an integrated European employment strategy, I would like to underline the contribution that the local and regional authorities can make to this strategy and appeal for your support in helping the Commission to make good our common concern for ensuring consistency between Community policies. You are members of a body whose task it is to formulate ideas and proposals aimed at greater consistency of action between all the Union's public authorities; a task which you have been doing since the beginning of the territorial pacts approach. You have a great amount of experience to offer, but also a great amount of responsibility to bear.'

Ms WULF-MATHIES, *member of the European Commission*

'CoR representatives have on various occasions already participated intensively in the discussion of reform of the Structural Funds. For example, at the Cohesion Forum in April, your Commission contributed to the discussion with the opinions of **Mr Fraga Iribarne** and **Mr Behrendt**.'

'I am convinced that large-scale participation of the regional and local operators in the drawing up, implementation and evaluation of programmes will enhance the quality of structural policy.'

Mr FISCHLER, *member of the European Commission*

'I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your constructive contributions to the debate on the further development of the common agricultural policy and rural development policy.'



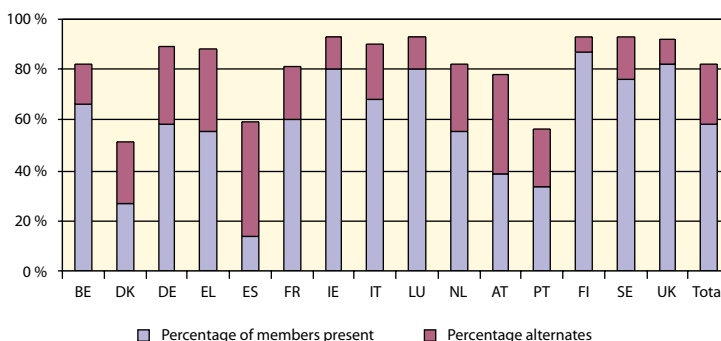
Consultative work

In the course of its plenary sessions in **1997**, the Committee of the Regions adopted **36 referral opinions**, **30 own-initiative opinions**, and **six other documents** (declarations, resolutions, memoranda, etc.), making a total of **72 documents**.

Members' attendance

No	Dates	Members' attendance	Total number of members
16	15–16 January 1997	140 members 42 alternates	182
17	12–13 March 1997	136 members 37 alternates	173
18	11–12 June 1997	121 members 47 alternates	168
19	17–18 September 1997	133 members 45 alternates	178
20	19–20 November 1997	131 members 38 alternates	169

Members' attendance by country



1998

Council Presidency United Kingdom/Austria



EVENTS

- ✓ Extraordinary Council decision that 11 Member States fulfilled the convergence conditions allowing the adoption of a single currency: the euro
- ✓ Adoption by the Council of irrevocably fixed conversion rates between the national currencies of the 11 Member States of the euro area
- ✓ Establishment of the European Central Bank (ECB)
- ✓ Entry into force of the Europol (European Police Office) Convention in the framework of an area of freedom, security and justice.



Willem Duisenberg



ECB headquarters



The CoR: a political forum

Guest speakers at plenary sessions

1998

21. 18–19 February:

Ms WULF-MATHIES, *member of the European Commission responsible for regional policy, relations with the CoR and the Cohesion Fund*

‘The CoR is an important ally of the Commission in ensuring that European policy is brought closer to citizens.’(...)‘The role of the CoR will be consolidated by the ratification of the Treaty of Amsterdam. If in this new term of office, further progress is made on its internal set-up, the CoR, as the indisputable mediator between Brussels and the cities and regions of the Union, will be able to exert even more effective influence. I can assure you that from the Commission’s point of view, we will continue to rely on your expertise to work together towards an enlarged Union in which competitiveness will be combined with solidarity.’

22. 12–13 March:

Lord WHITTY, *minister responsible for the UK Presidency of the EU and relations with the European Parliament. In 1997, spokesman in the House of Lords on European affairs, international development, foreign and commonwealth affairs, education and employment*

‘What we want is to develop a Europe that is closer to the people. We want a more efficient and a fairer Europe. And we want a Europe that stresses the concerns of its citizens, both now and in the future. And if we are to achieve this, we need to engage the institutions of the Union, and its people. We look to you to help us.’

23. 13–14 May:

Mr PRESCOTT, *UK Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions*

‘The over-riding priority of the UK Presidency is to help create a Europe working for all the people. To make people feel more prosperous, to feel more safe and more free because of what the European Union is doing.’

‘I personally have long taken the view that the regions of Europe have always been crucial to the Europe.’



Ms WULF-MATHIES, *member of the European Commission responsible for regional policy, relations with the CoR and the Cohesion Fund*

‘I am very pleased that, also in its new term of office, the Committee of the Regions is pressing ahead vigorously with the discussion on the Agenda 2000 major reform package.’

24. 15–16 July:

Mr JENKINS, *President of the European Economic and Social Committee*

‘I have always appreciated the open and friendly approach of your President, **Mr Dammeyer**, and I think we have developed a solid relationship which will hold firm even in the more difficult moments which can arise, mainly because of external factors.’

Ms FERRERO-WALDNER, *Secretary of State, Austrian Federal Minister*

‘In the context of these decisions, Europe needs the help of its towns and cities and local and regional authorities in serving as an interface and a source of ideas and incentives. We hope that the Committee of the Regions, in particular, will be able to make a major contribution by suggesting lines of approach.’

Mr FISCHLER, *member of the European Commission responsible for agriculture and rural development*

‘I would like to say right now that I believe diversity in Europe is not an impediment to successful integration, but on the contrary is an invaluable resource that we wish to keep and develop.’

25. 16–17 September:

Ms WULF-MATHIES, *member of the European Commission responsible for regional policy, relations with the CoR and the Cohesion Fund*

‘In November 1997, the Committee of the Regions adopted an initial, highly accomplished opinion on this issue. The going was tough then and, today too, the proposed recommendation on the general Structural Fund regulation is the subject of intensive debate. Reading the draft report drawn up by **Mr Fraga** and **Mr Behrendt** and looking at the many amendments that have been tabled, it is clear that the European debate on reform is high-on faithfully reflected within the Committee of the Regions. The Committee has given intense consideration to European structural policy, and for that I am particularly grateful.’

‘In the coming months, the Austrian Presidency will have the difficult task not only of facilitating progress, but also, at the Vienna summit, of seeking agreement on the



main components of Structural Fund reform. I hope that your in-depth debate on this issue and your opinion will push forward the difficult decision-making process within the Council.'

26. 18–19 November:

Mr FLYNN, *member of the European Commission responsible for employment and social affairs*

'I know we can draw great value from developing deeper collaboration with you, and with CEMR, your colleagues in the European arena and from working together to copperfasten your input into the employment strategy.'



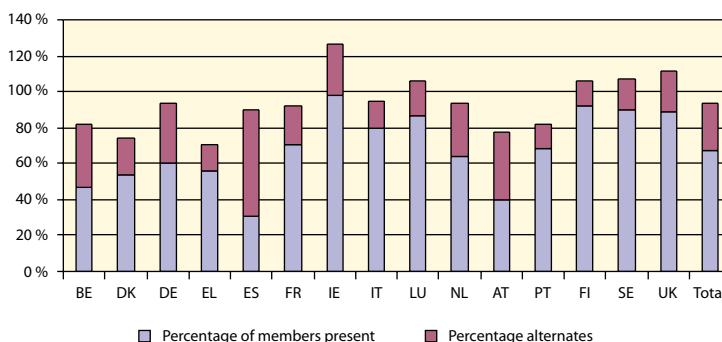
Consultative work

In the course of its plenary sessions in **1998**, the Committee of the Regions adopted **30 referral opinions**, **16 own-initiative opinions** and **four other documents** (declarations, resolutions, memoranda, etc.), making a total of **50 documents**.

Members' attendance

No	Dates	Members' attendance	Total number of members
21	18–19 February 1998	184 members 68 alternates	252
22	12–13 March 1998	129 members 56 alternates	185
23	13–14 May 1998	150 members 63 alternates	213
24	15–16 July 1998	145 members 56 alternates	201
25	16–17 September 1998	138 members 59 alternates	197
26	18–19 November 1998	148 members 54 alternates	202

Members' attendance by country



1999

Council Presidency Germany/Finland



EVENTS

- ✓ Official launch of the euro
- ✓ Appointment of **Mr Prodi** as the new President of the Commission
- ✓ Entry into force of the Treaty of Amsterdam
- ✓ Cologne European Council — **Mr Solana** appointed High Representative for the Common Security and Foreign Policy (CSFP) and Secretary-General of the Council of the Union
- ✓ Creation of the European Anti-fraud Office (OLAF) to fight fraud against the Community budget



Romano Prodi



Javier Solana



The CoR: a political forum

Guest speakers at plenary sessions

1999

27. 13–14 January:

Lord MENUHIN, *President of the Yehudi Menuhin Foundation*

‘The extraordinary thing here in Brussels is that we find ourselves before heads of State who are continuing the positive example set by the founding fathers. This really does amount to a respect for others, when the nation-State — the hotbed of the nation — is prepared to accept restrictions upon its ambitions. It has to be made clear to every individual, each region, and every institution, that it is not only the desire to expand, to construct bigger entities, to have larger budgets or greater control which counts. Instead, we must learn to cultivate happiness rather than pleasure, as it is the degree of contentment which we gain from our interaction with each other which matters. Indeed, this often leads to a higher quality of life than when we spend large sums of money and run up debts.’

Mr VERHEUGEN, *Minister of State in the German Foreign Ministry*

‘Ladies and gentlemen, the presidency attaches considerable value to reliable cooperation with the Committee of the Regions; your advice is important to us. The Federal Republic of Germany, as a federal State, has no problems with accepting or even promoting the political role of the regions, and to this end we wish in the course of our presidency to develop our cooperation with the Committee of the Regions.’

28. 10–11 March:

Ms WULF-MATHIES, *member of the European Commission responsible for regional policy, relations with the CoR and the Cohesion Fund*

‘This applies in particular to the regional development of urban and rural areas, where we need more cooperation in order to prevent the depopulation of rural areas, to enhance economic prospects, and to foster balanced development. It is not enough to pursue an isolated rural policy; the interdependence of rural and urban development must be given greater consideration in structural policy measures also. In view of the importance of towns for the EU’s economic, political and cultural development, it is necessary to give greater consideration to their role in regional policy, thereby placing greater emphasis on integration.’



Mr SANTER, *President of the European Commission*

‘(...)I should like to underline how important I view the role of regions in the web of Community affairs, particularly its work on implementing and explaining Community legislation. It is at local and regional levels that subsidiarity takes on its full meaning.’

29. 2–3 June:

Ms WULF-MATHIES, *member of the European Commission responsible for regional policy, relations with the CoR and the Cohesion Fund*

‘The Committee of the Regions’ discussions today and tomorrow bring the negotiations on Agenda 2000 full circle. Since the initial deliberations at the April 1997 cohesion forum, we have — together — given intense consideration in particular to structural policy reform. It is not surprising that particularly the COR should have become involved so intensively in the reform moves, since European regional policy is the true expression of subsidiarity. In this field, your experience and expertise are particularly called upon and much of your work has already found its way into the Commission drafts.’

‘In the legislative process too, you have also carved out your own specific identity. The Committee of the Regions was, for instance, the first body to take a coherent stance on reform of the Structural Funds.’

30. 15–16 September:

Mr SASI, *Finnish Minister for Foreign Trade*

‘I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak at the first plenary session of the CoR to be held during the Finnish Presidency. I come from a country with a tradition of strong local government. Local authorities have a great deal of responsibility and power, organising welfare services amongst other things. For this reason I see the involvement of local government representatives in EU cooperation as being very useful.’



31. 17–18 November:

Mr FRIEDMANN, *member of the Court of Auditors*

‘I welcome the existence of the Committee of the Regions since it helps to counteract the centralist anonymity of Europe perceived by many members of the public.’

Mr CHENARD, *President of the CLRAE*

‘Since your institution was established, our fates have been closely intertwined. And how could it have been otherwise? We share the same objective of defending and fostering local and regional democracy in Europe. In relation to our parent organisations — the Council of Europe and the European Union — to a certain extent we act as guardians of the autonomy of the communities we represent. We are sometimes even a thorn in the side for our organisations.’



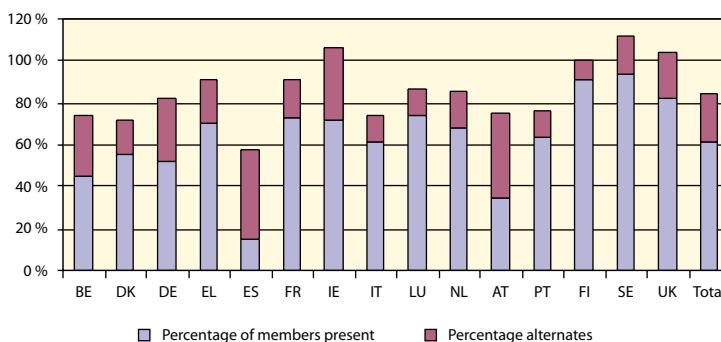
Consultative work

In the course of its plenary sessions in **1999**, the Committee of the Regions adopted **40 referral opinions**, **30 own-initiative opinions** and **nine other documents** (declarations, resolutions, memoranda, etc.), making a total of **79 documents**.

Members' attendance

No	Dates	Members' attendance	Total number of members
27	13–14 January 1999	138 members 60 alternates	198
28	10–11 March 1999	147 members 62 alternates	209
29	2–3 June 1999	125 members 53 alternates	178
30	15–16 September 1999	142 members 47 alternates	189
31	17–18 November 1999	131 members 44 alternates	175

Members' attendance by country



2000

Council Presidency Portugal/France



EVENTS

- ✓ Lisbon Special European Council — new EU strategy
- ✓ 50th anniversary of the Schuman Declaration
- ✓ Proclamation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union
- ✓ Nice European Council; the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) ends with an agreement on the Treaty of Nice



Nice European Council



The CoR: a political forum

Guest speakers at plenary sessions

2000

32. 16–17 February:

Mr Prodi, *President of the European Commission*

‘Looking at the agenda of your current session I am impressed by the range of important topics you cover in your discussions and which have a prominent place on the EU agenda. Moreover, a number of your opinions and resolutions are being adopted at a very timely moment.’

Mr SEIXAS DA COSTA, *Portuguese State Secretary for European Affairs*

‘As the bastion of subsidiarity, the Committee of the Regions is one of the linchpins of EU activity, giving local and regional authorities wider institutional recognition.’

33. 12–13 April:

Mr BUSQUIN, *member of the European Commission responsible for research*

Mr Busquin thanked **Ms Blandin** for her draft resolution and her report, which very appropriately stressed the social, human and cultural dimension of research and its impact on citizens. He stressed the question of ethics, especially in the case of the life sciences and technologies, where the problem was to reconcile respect for common values with respect for cultural differences deriving from European diversity.

‘In the research sector too, the Committee of the Regions and the local and regional authorities represented there must establish a permanent dialogue with the Commission. He urged its members to work towards that objective, and assured them that the Commission was ready to help.’

Mr BARNIER, *member of the European Commission responsible for regional policy and, ad personam, responsible for the Intergovernmental Conference*

‘I am particularly happy to be here today. As you may know, I have had the honour of being an alternate member of your assembly. My attachment to my own region



has always been at the heart of my political commitment and I attach great importance to the role of the regions in European construction.’

34. 14–15 June:

Mr FISCHLER, *member of the European Commission responsible for agriculture and fisheries*

He spoke on the subject of the regions and international trade and looked at the European agricultural model in the light of the agricultural negotiations which had begun at the WTO, along with some fisheries policy issues.

‘I should also like to thank your Committee and in particular the rapporteurs, **Mr Bocklet** and **Mr Penttilä**, for the draft opinion on the negotiating position on agriculture in the WTO negotiations.’

‘I should also like to thank the rapporteurs, **Mrs Mitchell**, **Mr Endlein**, **Mr Van Gelder**, and **Mr Ballhausen**, for their contributions. I have noted that in your draft on developing rural competitiveness you note the need for a sustainable, holistic and integrated development policy for rural areas as well as the need to achieve a better equilibrium between promotion of agriculture and promotion of rural development.’

35. 20–21 September:

Ms FONTAINE, *President of the European Parliament*

‘The Maastricht Treaty created the Committee of the Regions, and the Amsterdam Treaty consolidated its institutional role in the Community’s decision-making process, by increasing the number of areas for which its opinion is mandatory and by giving the Parliament the power to consult the Committee. Your Committee makes valuable contributions and this should encourage us to expand our dialogue in all the Committee of the Regions’ areas of responsibilities and to cooperate more closely with it, so as to make it easier for Committee opinions to be taken into account by European Parliament bodies and to step up fruitful dialogue between the rapporteurs.’

Ms DE PALACIO, *member of the European Commission responsible for transport and energy*

‘Allow me to emphasise once more how satisfied I am with the cooperation between our two institutions and how much I appreciate the Committee’s contribution to European decision-making.’



36. 13–14 December:

Ms REDING, *member of the European Commission responsible for education and culture*

‘I am firmly convinced of the key role played by the Regions in spheres such as education, training and youth.’

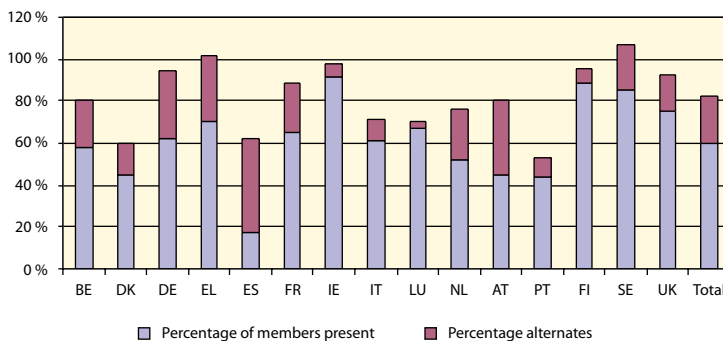
Consultative work

In the course of its plenary sessions in **2000**, the Committee of the Regions adopted **46 referral opinions**, **25 own-initiative opinions** and **eight other documents** (declarations, resolutions, memoranda, etc.), making a total of **79 documents**.

Members’ attendance

No	Dates	Members’ attendance	Total number of members
32	16–17 February 2000	148 members 61 alternates	209
33	12–13 April 2000	127 members 52 alternates	179
34	14–15 June 2000	130 members 56 alternates	186
35	20–21 September 2000	144 members 44 alternates	188
36	13–14 December 2000	130 members 47 alternates	177

Members’ attendance by country



2001

Council Presidency Sweden/Belgium



EVENTS

- ✓ Greece joins the euro zone
- ✓ Signing of the Treaty of Nice
- ✓ September 11 attacks in the United States; Extraordinary European summit in Brussels
- ✓ Laeken Summit: Declaration on the future of the Union and convening of a Convention to draw up a draft Constitutional Treaty



Valéry Giscard d'Estaing



The CoR: a political forum

Guest speakers at plenary sessions

2001

37. 14–15 February:

Ms LEJON, *Minister at the Ministry of Justice with responsibility for democracy issues and administration*

‘Europe’s future will be shaped by cooperation. Let us strive together for a Europe where peace, freedom, welfare and social cohesion prevail! All positive forces — European, national, regional and local — need to be harnessed to this task.’

Mr BARNIER, *member of the European Commission responsible for regional policy and institutional reform*

‘And because you represent the EU’s local and regional authorities, in other words those to whom regional policy is primarily addressed, the future cohesion policy is inconceivable without your participation.’

38. 4–5 April:

Mr SOLBES MIRA, *member of the European Commission responsible for economic and monetary affairs*

‘We are glad that increasing attention is being paid to the recommendations set out in the BEPGs at all levels of government. It is the best way of ensuring the coherence of economic policies against a background of decentralisation and the regions and local authorities have a very active role to play in this.’

39. 13–14 June:

Ms NEYTS-UYTTEBROECK, *Assistant Secretary of State at the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

‘I should like to point out, however, that a presidency cannot stand on its own. (...) A presidency is an ongoing exercise in solidarity and that is why I am very pleased to have been with you here today.’



40. 19–20 September:

Mr PRODI, *President of the European Commission*

‘The Committee of the Regions — an institution that is set to grow in importance in the Union — will, I know, make a significant contribution to the improvement of governance in Europe.’

41. 14–15 November:

Mr POSADA MORENO, *Spanish Minister for Public Administrations*

He gave the CoR a preview of the priorities of the Spanish Presidency, which would also start on 1 January 2002. He explained that the Spanish Presidency’s watchword would be “more Europe”, that is, “more Europe in the world”, since Europe was ready to play its part on the world stage and assume the political role of promoting the objectives of the international community; and because the EU would continue to move forward in its usual activities, with three key priorities: enlargement, the euro and the debate on the European institutions of the future.’

Mr DUISENBERG, *President of the European Central Bank*

Mr Duisenberg informed CoR members about the preparations for the new euro coins and notes, to be put into circulation on 1 January 2002, and then stressed the long-term challenges if economic and monetary union were to be a success. It was essential, he said, ‘that national and local authorities implement all measures facilitating a flexible and effective adjustment to the economic changes which affect each country and region in a different way. I would underline the fact that it is the responsibility of regional and local authorities to participate in the consolidation of public finances by keeping their expenditure under control.’



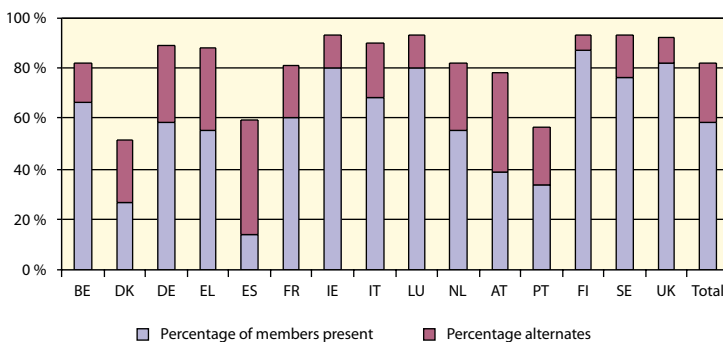
Consultative work

In the course of its plenary sessions in 2001, the Committee of the Regions adopted **49 referral opinions**, **23 own-initiative opinions**, and **11 other documents** (declarations, resolutions, memoranda, etc.) making a total of **83 documents**.

Members attendance

No	Dates	Members' attendance	Total number of members
37	14–15 February 2001	134 members 50 alternates	184
38	4–5 April 2001	127 members 59 alternates	186
39	13–14 June 2001	131 members 42 alternates	173
40	19–20 September 2001	131 members 54 alternates	185
41	14–15 November 2001	127 members 53 alternates	180

Members' attendance by country



2002

Council Presidency Spain/Denmark



EVENTS

- ✓ Introduction of euro notes and coins
- ✓ **Pat Cox** elected President of the European Parliament
- ✓ Inaugural session of the Convention on the Future of Europe
- ✓ Ratification of the Kyoto Protocol
- ✓ Expiry of the ECSC Treaty (Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community which entered into force in July 1952)
- ✓ Second Irish referendum — ‘YES’ to the Treaty of Nice
- ✓ Copenhagen Summit — approval of the European Commission’s recommendations to conclude negotiations with the candidate countries



Pat Cox



Yves-Thibault de Silguy and Jacques Santer



The CoR: a political forum

Guest speakers at plenary sessions

2002

42. 6 February:

First session of the CoR's third four-year term of office

After stating that, on 22 January 2002, the Council, on the basis of proposals made by the 15 Member States of the European Union, had appointed the full and alternate members of the Committee of the Regions for the four-year period starting from 26 January 2002, **the interim President, Mr Fraga Iribarne**, President of the Xunta of Galicia (ES-EPP) solemnly declared the Committee installed in office.

Sir Albert Bore, with 149 votes, was elected President of the Committee of the Regions and **Mr Eduardo Zaplana**, with 148 votes, as first Vice-President (ad personam replacement **Mr J.V. Herrera Campo**, ES/EPP).

43. 13–14 March:

Mr KINNOCK, *Vice-President of the European Commission, responsible for administrative reform*

‘The Commission regards these relations to be important since they help us to identify the problems in, and the potential offered by, the regions of the Union.’

Mr LUCAS GIMÉNEZ, *Minister and representative of the Spanish Presidency of the EU*

‘“More Europe” is the Spanish government’s vision and philosophy concerning the role that Spain may play as the holder of the EU Presidency in improving citizens’ lives and making Europe the area of prosperity, openness, freedom and security that its people are demanding.’

44. 15–16 May:

Mr FRERICHS, *President of the Economic and Social Committee*

‘This is the first time that a president of the European Economic and Social Committee has addressed the Plenary Assembly of the Committee of the Regions. I would like to thank you for this opportunity in the hope that it will set a precedent.’



Ms WINKLER, *Director of the European Observatory on racism and xenophobia*

‘For the entire EUMC team it is both an honour and a privilege to present our work to you and at the same time to give an assessment of the current situation. The local field is of primary importance in our work because it is the area where the issues can be directly tackled and where simple, socially inclusive perspectives can be developed.’

45. **3–4 July:**

Mr VERHEUGEN, *member of the European Commission*

‘The people of Europe must be alerted to the fact that enlargement is not a question of technical adjustments, standards, certification and quotas, but rather a piece of European history that will change the face of our continent for very many years to come — potentially for good if it succeeds and certainly for ill if it does not.’

Mr HAARDER, *Danish Minister for European Affairs. Representative of the Danish Presidency of the EU*

‘We have entitled our programme “One Europe”. Thus we wish to stress the importance we attach to the enlargement and at the same time signal a vision of one European cooperation encompassing everybody.’

Mr AMATO, *member of the Præsidium of the European Convention*

‘(...) democracy is not a choir in which everyone sings from the same hymn sheet. Each must do his or her part, and the task of the Europe of the future will be to make this possible.’

Statements by representatives of European associations

Mr CUATRECASAS, *Local and Regional Authorities of Europe*

‘As an institution representing local and regional authorities from 44 European countries, we think it is important to ensure that the enlarged Union does not ultimately create new barriers between the EU countries and countries outside the Union.’

Mr GABBE, *Association of European Border Regions*

‘Cross-border and interregional cooperation are a political priority and core task of the European Union which must be implemented at regional and local levels in partnership with the national local authorities.’



Mr HOFFSCHULTE, *Council of European Municipalities and Regions*

‘The role of the municipalities and regions is increasingly affected by the fact that it is our town halls and municipal and regional governments that apply most European legislation to specific situations and to citizens.’

Mr VAN NISTELROOIJ, *member of the CoR and of the Association of European Regions*

‘The AER is supporting the Committee of the Regions’ demand to simplify the European Union’s structure, to strengthen the institutional position and functions of the CoR, to make the decision-making procedures within the Union more transparent and in particular to apply the principle of subsidiarity explicitly with regard to regional and local levels.’

Mr OSTDAHL, *member of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions*

‘That is to say, the recognition of the role of the sub-State tiers of government in the founding principles of the Treaty (...)’

Ms SCHEPMANS, *Conference of Presidents of European Regional Legislative Assemblies (CALRE)*

‘The presidents also believe that the role and responsibilities of the Committee of the Regions should be stepped up. The Committee must enjoy the status of a Union institution, with the right of appeal to the Court of Justice, and it must be able to cooperate more effectively with the Commission and the European Parliament.’

‘The presidents of the regional parliaments (...) want to assign a key role to local authorities and municipalities. They favour the development of networks and cross-border cooperation, especially with a view to enlargement, as well as support for islands and peripheral regions.’

Ms SIITONEN, *CoR member and President of Eurocities*

‘We are calling for a more integrated and inclusive approach towards governance in the EU.’

Mr SYNAK, *Baltic Sea States Sub-regional Cooperation*

‘For us, regions of the Baltic Sea area, it is also of utmost importance to have conditions provided, which, while allowing for the sustainable development of Europe, conspire to use the big growth potential of our regions.’



Statements of representatives of the candidate countries on the forthcoming enlargement of the EU

Mr Peep ARU, *Association of Estonian Cities*

Mr Gellért SZABÓ, *Partnership of Local Government Associations of Hungary*

Mr Ian MICALLEF, *President of the Local Councils Association of Malta*

Mr Anton KOKALJ, *President of the Association of Municipalities of Slovenia*

Mr Luchezar ROSSENOV, *Mayor of Dobrich*

Mr Michael ZAMPELAS, *President of the Union of Cyprus Municipalities and Mayor of Nicosia*

Mr Andris JAUNSLINIS, *Chairman of the Union of Local and Regional Governments of Latvia*

Mr Vidmantas MACEVIUS, *local authorities of Lithuania*

Mr Jan KOZLOWSKI, *Deputy President of the Pomeranian Region in Poland*

Mr Liviu Nicolae DRAGNEA, *local authorities of Romania*

Mr Imrich BERES, *sub-national authorities of Slovakia*

Ms Ayyse Bahar CEBI, *sub-national government in Turkey*

46. 10 October:

Mr MARTIN, *First Vice-President of the European Parliament*

‘We’re now in a position of very fruitful cooperation and that’s come about through meetings at presidential level, meetings at secretary-general level, more fruitful meetings between rapporteurs of this organisation and of the European Parliament, better exchange of documentation and — not to be underestimated — contact between the political groups, which has also intensified. (...) But again, we recognise things could be improved and the Parliament is aware that the Committee of the Regions has reached a formal agreement with the Commission on methods of cooperation and we’re open to discussing what such an agreement could contain in terms of relations between the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions.’

Mr VITORINO, *member of the European Commission*

‘I am confident that support from your institution for this new information and communication strategy for the European Union will enable the European Union to rise more effectively to the challenges of the coming years.’



Mr BEREND, *European Parliament rapporteur on the European Union Solidarity Fund*

‘Ladies and gentlemen, the purpose of the Disaster Relief Fund is to make it possible for emergency financial assistance to be made available in response to the recent floods and in the event of similar disasters in the future. (...) The Fund will focus on giving immediate financial assistance to help the people, regions and countries concerned return to living normal conditions as quickly as possible.’

47. 20–21 November:

Mr SKANDALIDIS, *Greek Minister of the Interior*

‘The European Union cannot continue to be only a common market of European Member States. It needs to take the form of a Europe of Regions. It is for this reason that I believe that the creation of the Committee of the Regions has been a major institutional and political innovation and has been the second step after the revalorisation of the European Parliament which replies to the democratic deficit.’

Mr DEHAENE, *Vice-President of the European Convention*

‘I am very pleased with the active role played by the CoR’s observers at the Convention, not only their comments in the plenary sessions, but also their written contributions and involvement in the working groups for whom the regional issue has direct relevance.’



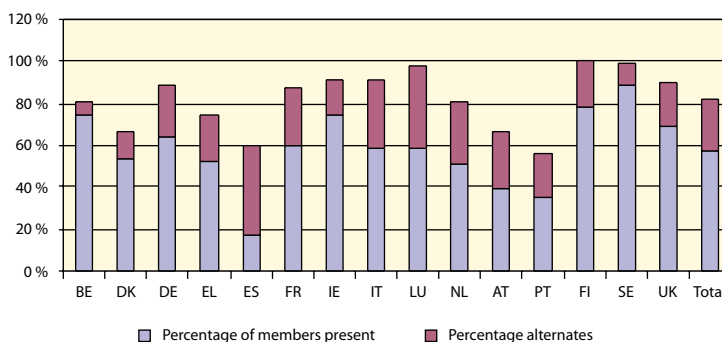
Consultative work

In the course of its plenary sessions in 2002, the Committee of the Regions adopted **44 referral opinions**, **10 own-initiative opinions**, and **four other documents** (declarations, resolutions, memoranda, etc.) making a total of **58 documents**.

Members' attendance

No	Dates	Members' attendance	Total number of members
42	6 February 2002	147 members 37 alternates	184
43	13–14 March 2002	137 members 58 alternates	195
44	15–16 May 2002	116 members 54 alternates	170
45	3–4 July 2002	123 members 59 alternates	182
46	10 October 2002	110 members 62 alternates	172
47	20–21 November 2002	129 members 61 alternates	190

Members' attendance by country



2003

Council Presidency Greece/Italy



EVENTS

- ✓ 10th anniversary of the Single Market
- ✓ Signing of the Security Pact by the EU and NATO
- ✓ War in Iraq
- ✓ 'YES' from the European Parliament to the accession of the 10 candidate countries
- ✓ Sweden says 'NO' to joining single currency
- ✓ Fifth conference of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in Cancún
- ✓ Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) in Rome — failure of the negotiations on the new Constitution for Europe



Michel Barnier



Philippe Busquin



Anna Diamantopoulou



Viviane Reding



The CoR: a political forum

Guest speakers at plenary sessions

2003

48. 12–13 February:

Mr VAN STAA, *President of the Council of Europe's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities*

'Mr President, I would like to thank you once again for the outstanding cooperation between the Congress and the Committee of the Regions, particularly over the last year. I assure you that we will continue to work together.'

Mr PRODI, *President of the European Commission*

'It is a great pleasure for me to be able to participate in your initiative, which confirms the political value of the Committee of the Regions, and also provides an opportunity to discuss how it can be strengthened.'

Statements on the forthcoming enlargement of the EU:

Mr Arturas ZUOKAS, *Mayor of Vilnius.*

Ms Monika HELBIG, *Secretary of State for European Affairs.*

Mr Władysław STASIAK, *Deputy Mayor of Warsaw.*

Mr Traian BASESCU, *Mayor of Bucharest.*

Mr Paul Borg OLIVIER, *Mayor of Valetta.*

Mr Gábor DEMSZKY, *Mayor of Budapest.*

Mr Stefan SOFIANSKI, *Mayor of Sofia.*

Mr Pavel BEM, *representing the city of Prague.*

Mr Pierre SHAPIRA, *Deputy Mayor of Paris and Head of International Relations for the French speaking community.*

Ms Danica SIMŠIČ, *Mayor of Ljubljana.*

Mr Michael ZAMPELAS, *Mayor of Nicosia.*



49. 9–10 April:

Ms DIAMANTOPOULOU, *member of the European Commission responsible for employment and social affairs*

She introduced the timetable for employment and social affairs, the employment strategy based on the open coordination method, i.e. no penalties and no legislative commitment to implementation, the regional dimension of the employment strategy, the European Social Fund, the new generation of Structural Funds which must take into account the human factor, as well as projects promoting equal opportunities and assisting disabled persons, and finally the Commission's collaboration with the European Observatory on Racism and Xenophobia, in particular as regards a study into the integration of Muslim communities in five of Europe's major cities.

Hearing on 'Attacks and threats against local and regional politicians in the Basque Country'

Mr ALONSO, *member of the Basque People's Party and Mayor of Vitoria-Gasteiz*

He explained that elections being held in his community were taking place without equal conditions and in a very tense atmosphere. 'The Basque Country lives in terror.'

Mr SAINZ DE LA MARA, *member of the Basque Nationalist Party (PNB), Mayor of Leioa, and President of the Association of Basque Local Authorities*

'ETA concentrated its cruel, anti-democratic action in a selective way, although not exclusively, against the representatives of the People's Party and the Spanish Socialist Party' (...)

'The problem of the Basque Country is not solely a Basque problem; it is a problem for all Europeans.'

Ms Ana URCHUEGUIA, *member of the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE), and Mayor of Lasarte-Oria*

'Today we have the last bastion against the costs of fascism. We form the last wall against imminent disaster. The lack of freedom which we suffer must be the final spur for our society to achieve its freedom. Despite the difficulties, we cannot sink into despair. Today we are the last beacons of hope. As my colleagues say, in our own houses, we are sometimes like prisoners on death row.'



Ms Maite PAGAZAURTUNDUA RUIZ, *member of the Socialist Party and the Basta Yà Association and local council member*

Ms Maite Pagazaurtundua Ruiz paid tribute to her brother, **Joseba Pagazaurtundua**, a socialist militant and member of the Basta Yà association, assassinated by ETA on 8 February 2003, in Andoain. She, too, explained the difficulties of her daily life and said: 'I am a clandestine mother.'

50. 2–3 July:

Mr BARNIER, *member of the European Commission responsible for regional policy and institutional reform*

'What a pleasure it is to be back here speaking at your plenary session. All the more so since this is the very first time it has been held in the presence of representatives of the local and regional authorities of the EU's new Member States, to whom I extend my warmest greetings.'

'Over those 15 months I was impressed by the quality of the contributions and statements (at the Convention) made by your representatives: **Claude du Granrut**, **Jos Chabert**, **Manfred Dammeyer**, **Patrick Dewael**, **Claudio Martini** and **Ramon Valcarcel**, and their alternates who certainly held their own. It has to be said that the task has not been easy, given the timing and the conditions under which the Convention was formed. Our achievements have been justifiably described by the Convention's Chairman, **Mr Valéry Giscard d'Estaing**, as beyond all expectations.'

Mr LA LOGGIA, *Italian regional affairs minister, representative of the presidency-in-office of the European Union*

He told the representatives of Europe's cities and regions that the task of the Italian Presidency would be to carry forward the outcome of the Convention into the Intergovernmental Conference, due to begin in October. He argued that the IGC should focus only on the key points of political disagreement rather than reopening the whole range of issues. Other priorities for the presidency were to improve synergy between European financial institutions, notably including the European Investment Bank, to make progress in tackling illegal immigration and to reinforce Europe's relationships with its Balkan and Mediterranean neighbours and with the United States and Russia.

51. 8–9 October:

Mr COX, *President of the European Parliament*

He felt that despite its flaws, the draft Constitution was a positive step forward and he sounded a warning for the coming negotiations: 'Governments should not exaggerate fears or raise false expectations of what can be achieved. State your case,



of course, but not in such a way which makes necessary compromise much harder to achieve. What you sow now you will reap later in terms of public opinion and ratification votes.'

'We in the European Parliament resisted the temptation to write a shopping list of changes for the draft. I hope others will also resist this temptation or the whole constructive consensus reached in the Convention would be reopened to no-one's benefit.'

Mr Cox highlighted the fact the EP would be seeking to involve national parliaments in its work relating to the IGC: 'I would also ask **Mr Gil-Robles** to associate others with this project, and that could include the CoR. As politicians we are all of us an essential part of the process — especially when it comes to ratification.'

Mr BUSQUIN, *member of the European Commission responsible for research*

He informed the representatives of European towns and regions about the priorities of European research policy.

'Europe currently spends around 2 % of GDP on research and development. Our aim is to increase this to 3 % and narrow the gap on research spending with the United States. A major aim is to improve the conditions for research investment by the private sector and in particular small and medium sized enterprises. Regions have an important role in this, whether it is in funding science parks or giving grants to SMEs for research projects. From January 2004, regional aid to small businesses' high level research and development will no longer need to be notified in advance to the Commission's competition authorities.'

52. 19–20 November:

Mr GAGLIARDI, *Italian Secretary of State for Regional Affairs*

He remarked on the progress of the Intergovernmental Conference, spearheaded by the Italian Presidency. He began by emphasising the 'balanced nature' of the draft Treaty proposals. With reference to Article 5 (recognition of local and regional autonomy) and Article 9 (subsidiarity and proportionality), he was pleased that the draft established 'a better distribution of competences between the European Union and the Member States'.

'Ongoing devolution in the Member States brings value added to the European integration process' while 'The CoR would play an increasingly important role now that the Commission had to consult the regions more often as part of the legislative process.'



Mr GALLAGHER, *Minister of State at the Irish Department of the Environment and Local Government;*

He set out the priorities of the forthcoming Irish Presidency. He started with EU enlargement: 'The unification of Europe is underway, but the enlargement process will not end in May 2004. Negotiations will continue with Romania, Bulgaria and Croatia, and the accession negotiations with Turkey should be launched in December 2004'.

Mr Gallagher said that enlargement would strengthen the security and stability of the Union, and provide Europe with new economic opportunities. The future presidency would show solidarity with the new Member States. 'We must support their need for development'. Stressing that the Structural Funds had contributed to Ireland's success, **Mr Gallagher** said that the accession countries had to be 'at the heart of cohesion policy after 2006'. More generally, he added, 'the forthcoming Irish Presidency will ensure cohesion policy is followed up'.

Improving the economic situation would also be a top priority of the presidency.

The environment would be another priority of the Irish Presidency, which was particularly hoping to establish a mechanism for greenhouse gas emission trading quotas, and push for new legislation on fluorinated gases.

Ms REDING, *member of the European Commission responsible for education and culture*

'Education and culture have a confirmed place in the draft Treaty drawn up by the Convention, both in terms of the definition of competences and policy. Stress is also placed on the essential and decisive nature of cultural diversity. I am glad that the draft Treaty requires unanimous decisions for the conclusion of agreements in the field of cultural and audiovisual services where these threaten the Union's linguistic and cultural diversity.'

Ms Reding said that a new generation of education and training programmes designed to take over from the Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci programmes would be launched. She also referred to the R3L programme 'Learning regions' and the 'Regional networks for lifelong learning', which was a result of cooperation between the Commission, the CoR and the European Parliament. This initiative, bringing together 120 regions from northern and southern Europe, included some 17 projects and was designed to support the networking of regions and cities with solid experience of lifelong learning.



Mr MAYSTADT, *President of the European Investment Bank (EIB)*

He spoke of the Bank's operational priorities, the first of which were regional development and economic and social cohesion. The Bank had set itself a target of granting 70 % of its direct loans for projects located in the EU's assisted areas. The Bank would also provide funding for the trans-European networks. TENs loans for 2003 amounted to EUR 5 billion.

Aid for the accession countries was another priority so that 'they can comply with EU policies and standards'. The Bank had also introduced the possibility of single signature loans with municipalities that did not require State surety. The Bank would give priority to the western Balkans, the partners around the Mediterranean basin, and to the Cotonou Investment Facility.

'For the last two years the Bank has been granting the regions **direct loans** to fund investment under the regional operational programmes.'



Consultative work

In the course of the initial plenary sessions in **2003**, the Committee of the Regions adopted **49 referral opinions, eight own-initiative opinions and five other documents** (declarations, resolutions, memoranda, etc.), **two outlook reports, two outlook opinions and two declarations (own-initiative)**, making a total of **68 documents**.

Members' attendance

No	Dates	Members' attendance	Total number of members
48	12–13 February 2003	129 members 57 alternates	186
49	9–10 April 2003	118 members 61 alternates	179
50	2–3 July 2003	113 members 48 alternates	161
51	8–9 October 2003	122 members 44 alternates	166
52	19–20 November 2003	119 members 45 alternates	164

Members' attendance by country by State

