

EUROPEAN UNION



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102nd MEETING OF THE BUREAU OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

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ITEM 15c)

COOPERATION WITH EUROPEAN REGIONAL AND LOCAL ASSOCIATIONS

Submitted by the Secretary-General

FOR INFORMATION

MEMO FOR COR BUREAU MEMBERS

102nd MEETING OF THE BUREAU OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

Item 15c)

Cooperation with European Regional and Local Associations

In the Bureau decision on 14 May 2002 on *Cooperation with European associations representing local and regional authorities* (R/CdR 106/2002 item 11), the Secretary-General was empowered to put in place a number of measures to increase cooperation with the associations. This cooperation is now systematic and monitored through the tri-annual meetings held between the Secretaries General of the Associations and the Secretary-General of the CoR.

The cooperation between the CoR and the major European Associations materialises through the structured dialogue, the presence of the Association Presidents or representatives amongst the speakers at CoR seminars and conferences, the Open Days, the presence of the President of the CoR at the Annual Assemblies of the major European Associations and the publication of common action plans that have been drawn up with all the major European Associations. This document presents the members of the Bureau with an overview of the 11 action plans in force during 2007.

It should be noted that since the last report *Cooperation with European regional and local associations* (R/CdR 191/2006 item 11b)) to the Bureau on 7 July 2006, the administration has prepared an adaptation of 9 action plans for 2007, two action plans were signed for 2 years (2006/2007). The action plans in force in 2007 can be found in R/CdR 150/2007 item 15c) Appendix 2.

Further information and the updated profiles and work programmes of the major European Associations for the second semester of 2007 can be found on the CoR website at www.cor.europa.eu/en/activities/list_of_association.htm.

1. The Action Plans

Action plans were signed for 2007 with the following associations: AEBR, AEM, AER; CALRE, CEMR, CPMR, Eurocities and REGLEG.. The Secretary General also signed a Declaration of common interest with a national association, the Union of Cyprus Municipalities as well as two Declarations with regional associations, the Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation (BSSSC) and Arco Latino.

The areas of cooperation listed in the various action plans are as follows:

- involvement of association expertise in selected task forces set up by the CoR in order to support the work of the rapporteurs

- cooperation in the dialogue between the European Commission and the Associations
- participation in joint conferences
- cooperation in Subsidiarity monitoring
- cooperation on Regional Policy, Territorial Cooperation and the Lisbon Strategy
- joint activities in Communication.

To further improve the cooperation, midterm reviews are scheduled with the associations to evaluate the action plans.

2. Involvement of association expertise in selected task forces set up by the CoR for the consultation works

Following the work programmes of the commissions presented to the Bureau in April 2006 and February 2007 (R/CdR 80/2006 item 7c and R/CdR 2/2007 item 10 respectively) a number of task forces have been established in which the associations contributed with their specific expertise to the work of the rapporteurs in the drawing-up of opinions. Contributions take the form of written position papers and/or preparatory meetings with the rapporteur and/or their experts. A list of the task forces established since July 2006 can be found in R/CdR 150/2007 item 15c) Appendix 1.

All action plans now specify the policy areas where associations would like to be consulted and opinions for which a consultation could be useful are identified at an early stage. Associations are invited to specific CoR events and representatives of associations are included in the list of speakers.

3. Participation in joint conferences

In 2006 the President of the CoR addressed the CPMR General Assembly in Murcia (Spain) on 26/27 October and the REGLEG General Assembly in Cardiff (UK) on 16/17 November while the Secretary General addressed the AEBR Annual Conference in Pamplona (Spain) on 23-25 November.

Beyond the President's and the Secretary General's participation in the Associations' Annual General Meetings, there was cooperation and CoR presence in events organised by the associations and vice versa. A detailed list of CoR events can be found in R/CdR 150/2007 pt 15c) Appendix 1.

Furthermore, the CoR co-organised two seminars on Public Private Partnerships and on Participatory Democracy together with the Union of Cyprus Municipalities which took place in Nicosia on 12 April 2007.

4. Cooperation on Subsidiarity monitoring

Based on the different action plans CALRE, REGLEG and CEMR took part in the second test phase for the establishment of the CoR's subsidiarity monitoring network, as well as 7 national associations from Cyprus, Denmark, France, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania and the Netherlands. The test phase was presented to the CALRE Standing Committee in Udine (Italy) on 28/29 January 2007.

5. Cooperation on Regional Policy, Territorial Cooperation and the Lisbon Strategy

This cooperation was in particular close as regards the project of the "European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation", an initiative launched by the CoR in 2000. The Secretary General of the AEBR, Mr Guillermo-Ramírez, participated as a speaker in the EGTC political roundtable, the CoR organised on 7 June. Furthermore the CoR provided input to the EGTC seminar organised by the Assembly of European Regions on 10 July. The associations also participated in the preparation and the discussion during the second Territorial Dialogue organised by the Committee of the Regions on 14 February 2007 in view of the Spring Council and the progress on the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy.

6. Joint activities in Communication

Over the past years the CoR has succeeded in publishing a number of articles signed by either the President or Secretary-General in various newsletters of European and/or national associations of local and regional authorities. Following the positive experience in June 2006 the Committee in June 2007 organised a second workshop with editors of 28 periodicals of associations in order to discuss how to further deepen the cooperation. Additionally 10 associations were represented with stands to show best practices in communicating Europe. Furthermore the CoR produced a brochure on "Plan D" ("Communiquer sur l'Europe dans les villes et les régions – 2ème rapport d'étape sur la mise en oeuvre du Plan D – Décentralisation (Oct. 2006 - Juin 2007)") to which many associations provided valuable input. Following this year's Forum it was decided that associations will receive in the future a regular newsletter called "Going local" with the aim to further improve the dissemination of CoR information to the local level.

As another concrete result of the forum, further associations have agreed to reserve a regular column for the CoR in which the institution can present its political and consultative works and the President of the Committee will be able to communicate on European issues. Visibility of the CoR through "branding" at Association events and vice versa has been improved (for example, the Associations' stands at CoR events, patronage of associations' events or the invitation of associations to organise their events in the CoR building).

Many associations were also involved in the preparation of the OPEN DAYS 2006 and 2007 and obviously participated in the events.

The CoR's Unit for Communication, Press and Protocol cooperated closely with a number of associations in organising a wide distribution of the special brochure produced following the Rome plenary. Partners included the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI), the National Association of Portuguese Municipalities (ANMP) and autonomous regions of the Açores and Madeira, as well as three associations in France, representing Mayors, Departments and Regions.

7. Regular meetings of the Secretaries General

The regular meetings of the Secretaries General of the Committee of the Regions, the European associations and the Congress of local and regional authorities of Europe took place on 7 November 2006, 30 January and 20 June 2007 to exchange views on major political developments in Europe, to inform on upcoming activities of all parties and to coordinate joint activities.

8. Structured Dialogue

Since the last report, further meetings of the Structured Dialogue took place, one General Structured Dialogue with Commission President Barroso on the Commission's Legislative and Work Programme for 2007 (7 December 2006) and one Thematic Structured Dialogue with Commissioner Almunia on the role of regional, national and EU budgets in the Economic and Monetary Union (20 October 2006). Furthermore a working lunch was organised between Commission Vice-President Barrot and Presidents of major European associations on the occasion of the February plenary session of the Committee of the Regions (see also Bureau document R/CdR 150/2007 item 9).

In addition brochures on the last four meetings of the Structured Dialogue were produced, including the Thematic Structured Dialogue meetings with Commissioners Wallström and Figel' in June 2006. These brochures were sent to all speakers, all European and national associations in the CoR database, to all relevant services in the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Permanent Representations of the Member States as well as to the CoR and Commission Info Points.

Appendix 1 – Table of task forces and conferences

Appendix 2 – Signed action plans for 2007
