



# The Committee of the Regions - an instrument of the regions in the EU?

## Work assignment:

1. Read through the factsheet and summarize the content.
2. Then discuss whether the Committee of the Regions is a good instrument for strengthening the position of the regions within the EU.

## 1. General information and composition

**The European Committee of the Regions (CoR)** is the voice of regions and cities in the European Union (EU). It represents **local and regional authorities** throughout the European Union and issues opinions on new legislation that has an impact on regions and cities. This affects 70% of all EU legislation.

The CoR is a political assembly and consists of 329 members and 329 deputies **from all EU countries** (organized by parties and headed by a president) who have been elected at local or regional level, for example as mayor or president of a region. The term of office of CoR members is five years and begins on the date of their official appointment by the Council of the European Union. The members are divided into six political groups according to their parties. The members meet six times a year in Brussels to debate opinions on proposed legislation and adopt resolutions on further measures to be taken by the EU. The members of the CoR are supported by an administration headed by a Secretary-General.

## 2. Pillars of the CoR

- Proximity to citizens: The CoR's work aims to bring the EU closer to its citizens. By involving regional and local elected representatives, who are familiar with the day-to-day concerns of their constituents, and by inviting citizens to various events and debates, the CoR helps to narrow the gap between the work of the EU institutions and EU citizens.
- Participation in decision-making processes: The CoR wants to involve regional and local authorities in EU decision-making and thus promote better participation by EU citizens.



- Multi-Level-Governance: Another pillar of the CoR's work is partnership-based cooperation. The CoR is convinced of the benefits of a coordinated approach at European, national, regional and local level.
- Subsidiarity: The principle of subsidiarity must be observed throughout the EU legislative process. This means that decisions are taken at the level of government or administration that is best suited to the public interest - preferably the municipal level.

### **3. The working method of CoR**

The CoR is consulted by the European Commission and the Council of the EU whenever new proposals are presented in policy areas that have an impact on the regional or local level: economic, social and territorial cohesion, structural funds, the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, employment and social affairs, education, youth, vocational training, culture and sport, the environment, energy and climate change, transport, trans-European networks and public health.

The members of the CoR then examine the legislative proposals submitted in six specialist commissions (subcommittees), each of which is responsible for specific policy areas, and draw up opinions that are then discussed and adopted at the CoR's plenary sessions. The recommendations adopted on proposals for EU legislation are therefore based on the experience and expertise of the local and regional level. The CoR can also propose new legislation and put new issues on the EU agenda.

The role of the CoR was recognized and strengthened by the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009. The CoR must now be consulted at all stages of the EU legislative process and can challenge legislation before the Court of Justice if it considers that its institutional rights have been infringed or that national, regional or local governments have not been sufficiently taken into account. The CoR's relations with the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union have thus been strengthened. The EU is not obliged to take the CoR's opinions into account and does so to a greater or lesser extent in practice. More detailed information can be found in the CoR's impact report.



#### 4. Who is the current president?



**Vasco Alves Cordeiro** was elected President of the European Committee of the Regions in June 2022.

He was born in 1973 in the Azores, an autonomous region of Portugal. He studied law and regional law and has been a member of the Legislative Assembly of the Autonomous Region of the Azores since 1996. Since then, he has held various posts in the regional government, including Regional Minister for the Economy (2008-2012), European and Foreign Affairs (2004-2008) and Agriculture and Fisheries (2003-2004).

#### 5. Glossary

##### **Local and regional authorities**

= all administrative units below the national level that are responsible for carrying out a variety of public tasks and services in their respective areas. These bodies play a crucial role in the administration and development of their regions and municipalities by ensuring proximity to the population and responding to local needs and priorities. Local authorities are usually cities, municipalities or counties. Regional authorities are larger territorial units such as provinces, regions or, in federal countries, federal states.

##### **Multi-Level-Governance**

= is a scientific concept for analyzing EU policy and a term that describes the special form of decision-making in the European Union that is based on partnership and consensus and on the interdependence of several political levels that is typical of the EU.

##### **Regional government**

= an administrative unit responsible for the governance and administration of a specific region or geographical area within a country. These governments are often tasked with managing local issues and concerns specific to their region, working under the national government of the country. In Germany, these are the state governments. As not every country in the EU is federal, i.e. divided into federal states, they are referred to as regional governments.

##### **Subsidiarity**

= socio-political principle according to which higher-level social units (especially the state) may only take on tasks that lower-level units are unable to perform.