

2 July 2014, Brussels
Committee of the Regions

Programme

Strengthening the role of regional
parliaments
in EU affairs

**Challenges,
practices, and
perspectives**



Outline and objective

The Lisbon Treaty recognises regional parliaments with legislative powers within the framework of the system of subsidiarity monitoring. This affects a total of 74 regional parliaments from eight EU Member States. Many of these have undertaken reforms to adapt to these opportunities for becoming a more active player in the EU multi-level system. Adapting to the so-called Early Warning Mechanism is certainly at the heart of these reforms. The Committee of the Regions (CoR) has supported regional parliaments in various ways, above all by establishing a Subsidiarity Monitoring Network and by setting up the database REGPEX to help regional parliaments to exercise their new rights and improve regional inter-parliamentary cooperation.

The conference aims to raise awareness of the role of and challenges facing regional parliaments in this context. Contributions by academics and practitioners focus on an initial evaluation of the new mechanisms and their use by regional parliaments. In addition, the

conference aims to bring practitioners from regional parliaments into contact with each other and with policy-makers and experts at European level.

The conference is jointly organised by the CoR and the Jean Monnet Chair from Tuebingen University, Gabriele Abels.

Target group

Participants fall into one of the following categories:

- Practitioners from regional parliaments' administrations;
- Officials from regional representation offices in Brussels;
- Representatives of EU institutions;
- Experts and Brussels-based think tanks with an interest in regional affairs.

More information at: www.cor.europa.eu/regparl

- 9:00-9:30 Registration
- 9:30-10:00 Welcome addresses
*Interpretation: EN/DE/FR/ES/IT
Room: JDE 52*

Daniel Janssens, *Secretary-General ad interim of the Committee of the Regions*

Peter Friedrich, *Minister for Bundesrat, European and International Affairs, Baden-Wuerttemberg, Germany, CoR Member*

- 10:00-10:45 Keynote speech
*Interpretation: EN/DE/FR/ES/IT
Room: JDE 52*

Regional parliaments in multi-level governance – challenges and perspectives in the Post-Lisbon Era

Professor Dr Gabriele Abels, *University of Tuebingen, Germany*

The Lisbon Treaty provides new rights and opportunities for regional parliaments to engage in EU affairs. Regional parliaments with legislative powers are now recognised actors within the Early Warning Mechanism of subsidiarity monitoring. Yet, regional parliaments adapt to the new provisions to varying degrees and in different ways. This introductory speech will present an overview with regard to the following questions:

- Why should regional parliaments play a role in EU policy-making?
- In which ways have regional parliaments adapted to the new rights and opportunities?
- What are the key challenges and perspectives for regional parliaments?
- What can and should the CoR do to strengthen the role of regional parliaments in EU policy-making?

Chair: **Daniel Janssens**, *Secretary-General ad interim of the Committee of the Regions*

- 10:45-11:15 Coffee break

- 11:15-12:45 Parallel Working Groups: first round

Group 1 - *Interpretation: EN/DE/FR/IT
Room: JDE 52*

Scrutinising regional governments on EU affairs: exchange about legal provisions, existing instruments and best practices

Depending on a number of conditions such as the state of relations between the executive and legislative levels, the status of the regions, resources etc. regional parliaments with legislative powers have responded to the new opportunities in different ways. Enhanced scrutiny powers vis-à-vis regional governments, expanding participatory mechanisms and often stronger inter-parliamentary cooperation are at the heart of reform activities. This working group's aim is to have an exchange of information about recent and ongoing reforms and the development of legal provisions:

- What reform activities have been undertaken or are still underway?
- What can we learn from initial experiences with the new system/EWS? What are the practical problems on the ground?
- What are favourable conditions and helpful instruments for stronger regional parliaments? What are the key challenges?

Chair: **David R. M. Melding**, *member of the National Assembly for Wales and Deputy Presiding Officer of the National Assembly, United Kingdom*

Panellists:

Isolde Ries, *Deputy Speaker of the Regional Parliament of the Saarland, Germany, alternate member of the CoR*

Costanza Gaeta, *Director for Institutional and European Affairs at the Conference of the Presidents of the Italian Regional Parliaments*

Professor Dr Sabine Kropp, *Free University of Berlin, Germany*

Group 2 - Interpretation: EN/DE/FR/IT
Room JDE 51

Participation of regional parliaments in the Early Warning System, REGPEX and in the CoR's Subsidiarity Monitoring Network

The Early Warning System touches upon the core of regional parliaments' activities. They cannot, however, influence decisions. A number of CoR activities aim to support regional parliaments within the EWS. This working group will introduce the CoR activities and discuss them:

- What activities and instruments are in place at the CoR and how do they work?
- How can the CoR support structure be used by regional parliaments and what is their experience?
- What do regional parliaments expect from the CoR and how can the support structure be further developed?

Chair: **Dr Michael Schneider**, Member of the Committee of the Regions, Chair of the Subsidiarity Steering Group

Panellists:

Raffaele Cattaneo, President of the Regional Council of Lombardy, Italy, chair of the CALRE Working Group on Subsidiarity, Member of the Committee of the Regions

Pierre Schmitt, KU Leuven, Belgium

Dr Klemens Fischer, Minister plenipotentiary at the Austrian PermRep to the EU

12:45-14:15 Networking lunch

14:15-15:45 Parallel Working Groups:
second round

Group 3 - Interpretation: EN/DE/FR/ES
Room: JDE 52

Cooperation and communication: inter-parliamentary relations and EU institutions

Cooperation too is becoming more and more important for regional parliaments. This entails inter-parliamentary cooperation as well as cooperation with EU institutions. By increased communication with others, parliaments can counter information asymmetries and improve their policy impact. This working group will look at existing forms of cooperation and communication and future challenges:

- To what extent do regional parliaments interact with each other?
- How useful are existing forms of regional inter-parliamentary cooperation and how can they be improved?
- What communication channels exist between regional parliaments and EU institutions (e.g. within the "political dialogue")? What are the expectations of regional parliaments?
- How is the Commission dealing with subsidiarity analyses from regional parliaments?

Chair: **Pilar Rojo Noguera**, President of CALRE

Panellists:

Dr Peter Bußjäger, Director of the Institute of Federalism, Innsbruck, Austria

Karolina Borońska-Hryniewiecka, Ph. D., Assistant Professor, Institute of Political Science, University of Wrocław, Poland

Dorthe Christensen, European Commission, Deputy Head of Unit in the Secretariat General, responsible for relations with National Parliaments, the EESC, the CoR and the Ombudsman

Group 4 - Interpretation: EN/DE/FR
Room JDE 51

EU economic governance: what role for regional parliaments and executives?

In the financial and economic crisis, national governments in the EU have been in the driving seat for decisions on key reforms. Very often the participation of parliaments in economic governance and their budgetary rights are restricted, and in fact only exist to some extent at national and EU level. Regions are strongly affected by EU economic governance and by the consequences of the crisis; yet, the role of regional parliaments is limited. This working group will look at the effects of EU economic governance and the crisis on the regions:

- How do the current changes in economic governance affect the role of the regions at EU and at Member State level?
- To what extent and in what ways do regional parliaments participate in economic policy-making in the EU multi-level governance system?
- How can the regions – governments and parliaments – become stronger in EU economic governance?

Chair: **Claude Gewerc**, member of the Picardy Regional Council; France, and Political Coordinator ad interim of the CoR's Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform

Panellists:

Dr Neil McGarvey, University of Strathclyde, United Kingdom

Professor Iain Begg, European Institute, London School of Economics and Political Science, United Kingdom

Nicholas Brookes, Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions (CPMR)

15:45-16:00 Coffee break

16:00-16:30 Wrap-up session incorporating the results of the Working Groups and general discussion

Interpretation: EN/DE/FR/ES/IT
Room: JDE 52

Chair: **Dr Michael Schneider**, Member of the Committee of the Regions, Chair of the Subsidiarity Steering Group and the chairs of working groups 1-4

16:30-18:15 Round table
Interpretation: EN/DE/FR/ES/IT
Room: JDE 52

The future of European integration and the challenges for regional assemblies

The round table brings together leading politicians from different regional parliaments and representative institutions with academic scholars. The discussion will focus on the broader issues concerning the place of regional assemblies in European integration. It will identify the challenges ahead and the possibilities available for dealing with them. The role of parliamentary cooperation between different levels of governance and the role of regional representative institutions (especially of the CoR) in fostering such cooperation will be addressed in more detail.

Welcome address

Michel Lebrun, President of the Committee of the Regions

Chair: Professor Dr Gabriele Abels, University of Tuebingen, Germany

Participants:

Peter Friedrich, Minister for Bundesrat, European and International Affairs, Baden-Wuerttemberg, Germany

Michel Lebrun, President of the Committee of the Regions

Raffaele Cattaneo, President of the Regional Council of Lombardy, Italy, chair of the CALRE Working Group on Subsidiarity, Member of the Committee of the Regions

Isolde Ries, Deputy Speaker of the Regional Parliament of the Saarland, Germany, alternate member of the CoR

Professor Dr Andreas Maurer, University of Innsbruck, Austria

18:15 Reception

Conference venue

Committee of the Regions, Rue Belliard/Belliardstraat 99-101, Brussels

Organisers

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Peter Friedrich, Minister for Bundesrat, European and International Affairs, Alternate Member of the Committee of the Regions

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