



**European Committee  
of the Regions**

# Annual Impact Report

European Committee of the Regions  
Achievements

**2023**

January 2024



## Foreword

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In 2023, the European Committee of the Regions has, once again, proved its importance for European democracy. Thanks to the hard work of its members and its administration, the Committee succeeded in bringing EU legislation closer to citizens and the territorial realities. We adopted 53 opinions and six resolutions, but the CoR's impact goes beyond its formal role as a consultative body. The CoR, as the political assembly of local and regional representatives, has successfully provided the essential contribution of regions and cities to address the main challenges the EU is facing.

Our impact in promoting the economic, social and territorial cohesion of the European Union and the added value of cohesion policy for Europe's regions and cities was one of our key milestones in 2023. The Committee unanimously put forward a vision on how to make the EU's regional policy stronger and better equipped to address new challenges and growing disparities. The Council conclusions on the future of cohesion policy adopted by the General Affairs Council last November took on board many aspects of our opinion. Our work will continue in 2024 and beyond,

in the Committee and with the Cohesion Alliance to make sure cohesion policy remains a pillar of the European project.

The Committee also contributed to building more sustainable local and regional communities. With the release of the Green Deal Going Local handbook, we provided an unprecedented tool to help implement the Green Deal at local and regional level. The European Commission incorporated several recommendations of the opinion on Fit 4 Future, followed by the Council and the European Parliament. We also stepped up our international engagement on the Sustainable Development Goals and the fight against the climate crisis, with successful participation in the High-Level Political Forum in New York that marked the first-ever meeting with the UN Secretary General, and at the COP28 in Dubai. The Committee's position in the opinion "Preparing for and dealing with crises: strengthening the resilience of the Union, its regions and cities" was largely echoed by the European Commission, including with the development of the territorial vulnerability scoreboard.

Our commitment to gender equality was further strengthened this year, with the adoption of the opinion for stopping gender-based violence and the adoption of a Gender Equality Action Plan by the Bureau last October.

Our work went beyond the current EU's borders, with the strong support to Ukraine and all candidate countries. I had the opportunity to meet with President Zelenskyy and various representatives in Kyiv in April 2023 to show our firm support for Ukraine's reconstruction and path to enlargement. Our response included the promotion of the summer camps for Ukrainian children, thanks to which many cities and regions welcomed more than 3000

children, and the enlargement of the programme for Young Elected Politicians to all candidate countries. Our Committee took part for the first time in the 2023 London Ukraine Recovery Conference, representing the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for the Reconstruction of Ukraine. The European Parliament reflected several recommendations of our opinion in its report on the establishment of the Ukraine Facility.

In many other areas, including the requests for opinions from the Swedish and Spanish Presidencies of the Council of the European Union, we contributed to strengthen the voice of regions and cities such as improving the EU economic governance, the fight against disinformation or developing strategic foresight capacities, among many others. And we went to the ground, to Kiruna and to Logroño, to better understand the issues in these territories and bring back the needed answers, in two relevant declarations.

Last but not least, as we enter the year of the European elections, we reinforced our cooperation with the European Parliament by signing a Memorandum of Understanding. In 2023, the European Parliament made references to enhancing the role of the Committee in several reports, acknowledging its contribution to strengthening European democracy. This will be key as we celebrate our 30th Anniversary and look forward to the future of our institution and beyond. With the 10th European Summit of Regions and Cities, which will take place in Mons on 18-19 March 2024, we will make our voice heard for building a stronger and fairer Europe for all.

**Vasco Alves Cordeiro,**  
President of the European  
Committee of the Regions

## Introduction

The Annual Impact Report (AIR) provides a summary of the work and of the key achievements of the European Committee of the Regions in 2023. Our 329 elected politicians in regions, cities, villages and municipalities of the 27 Member States of the EU, give voice and visibility to the more than one million locally and regionally elected representatives.

The 2023 Report assesses the CoR's impact on the EU's decision-making process looking at its influence on preparatory or final legal texts adopted by the EU institutions; the visibility of local and regional aspects in EU agenda-setting; changes in the EU's working methods; EU legislation enhancing the daily life of citizens;

EU actions promoted or initiated by the CoR, including the ones fostering democracy and enhancing our Committee's visibility.

Thanks to the strong commitment of its members and staff, the CoR continued to achieve its mission successfully in 2023, as proven by the six resolutions and 53 opinions adopted. This considerable endeavour was accompanied by a consistent number of actions and initiatives that helped to maximise our Committee's visibility and credibility.

As we demonstrated during the external Bureau meetings in Kiruna and Logroño, as well as with our meetings in Kyiv and Lviv, the CoR and its Members have engaged with local communities in the EU and beyond.

I am particularly pleased that we were able in 2023 to set new standards in the administration, with remote interpretation, artificial intelligence-based machine translation and new ways of working resulting in significant cost savings.

While looking at the good results of 2023, let's already prepare our action for the future. I am convinced that our past achievements will inspire us for the coming year, recognising the challenge that going for impact is a process that requires continuous effort and consistency.

**Petr Blížkovský,**  
Secretary-General

## Bringing Europe closer to its citizens

### The CoR's strong influence and engagement in high-level discussions on skills policies during the European Year of Skills (EYS)

#### Why it matters?

By actively engaging in high-level discussions on skills policies during the EYS, the CoR reinforced its position as a key stakeholder in European policy-making and ensured that the perspectives and requirements of Local and Regional Authorities (LRAs) are incorporated into broader European strategies.



#### How it will be followed up

The CoR will continue its work on the EYS in 2024 and will strive to further enhance skills development and awareness in Europe, organising an event and commissioning a study on the involvement of LRAs in shaping skills development and training policies.

### The CoR's contribution to strengthening European democracy was recognised by the European Parliament in different reports

#### Why it matters?

The European Parliament has recognised the CoR's contribution to strengthening European democracy and made references to enhancing the role of the CoR, including in the AFCD opinion on European Union regulatory fitness and subsidiarity and proportionality – report on Better Law-Making.



#### How it will be followed up

The key theme with the greatest potential for political impact in 2024 related to a new chapter for participatory democracy.

### Explicit reference to the CoR's work in the first EU Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Voluntary Review drafted by the European Commission

#### Why it matters?

The CoR helped to give more visibility to SDGs and to show how essential the role of regions and cities is in reaching them. The European Commission repeatedly refers to the CoR's valuable work and integrated the CoR's recommendations in the EU Voluntary Review.



#### How it will be followed up

The Voluntary Review of the European Commission was presented jointly with the Commission, Council, CoR and European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) at the United Nations in July 2023. It contains a forward-looking point indicating explicitly that it will work with the CoR on SDGs to better communicate on it and accelerate implementation.



See more:

**The Council Conclusions on SDGs adopted on 27 November 2023 focused exclusively on the local and regional level and took on board the CoR's positions such as on the need to have an EU overarching strategy and an EU multi-stakeholders platform**

#### Why it matters?

The Council Conclusions recognised the role of the CoR as a key driver in boosting SDG localisation, referring to CoR work three times. These Conclusions also supports the CoR position that SDG localisation is a key pillar of SDG implementation and that regions and cities are crucial partners in achieving them.

**The New Young Elected Politicians (YEP) programme's cohort was launched for 2023, bringing the total amount of participants in the YEP programme to 836**

#### Why it matters?

156 YEPs participated, covering all EU Member States and, for the first time, all EU candidate countries. Their participation in the EURegionsWeek contributed to maximise the visibility of the CoR, thus increasing the reach-out to the over 1 million regional and local representatives across the EU.



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#### How it will be followed up

Mainstreaming YEP support to rapporteurs through Youth-Say and maintaining efforts to have YEPs as speakers in the CoR plenaries and commission meetings.

**The European Network of Regional and Local Councillors has reached 3 000 participants and gathered local and regional politicians from all 27 EU Member States**

#### Why it matters?

It is generating relevant impact by bringing Europe closer to local communities and encouraging local and regional councillors to organise EU and CoR related activities within their regions, cities and villages. It is also a key tool to cooperate with the European Parliament in view of the next EU elections.



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#### How it will be followed up

Efforts ongoing to build on its success and make sure that the network continues to grow in the years to come, by offering new products, services and networking initiatives, in full coordination with the parallel project 'Building Europe with Local Councillors' (BELC) run by the European Commission.



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#### How it will be followed up

The Council Conclusions together with three CoR participations in five months in the Council Working Party meetings pave the way for increased cooperation with the Council on SDGs.

## Building resilient and innovative local communities

**Recognition at European and global level of the role of the CoR and LRAs in adaptation to climate change**

### Why it matters?

Strong reference to the role of LRAs in the EU mandate for UNFCCC COP28. Leading CoR role in proposing a revision of EU Green Deal initiatives for cities and regions. Formal recognition of the CoR as a key partner to implement UN COP 15 and other relevant activities on biodiversity.



### How it will be followed up

In 2024 the CoR will capitalise on this work in preparation for a EU-based COP29, where the institution is expected to have a reinforced presence. At EU level, the Green Deal Going Local Handbook will provide guidance and support for LRAs engaged in the climate and energy transition.

**The European Commission's proposal, following the CoR opinion on Fit 4 Future, incorporates many recommendations, and the Council and the European Parliament also took up other points**

### Why it matters?

The CoR was closely involved in shaping a newly created system of a European interoperability governance and will have a key role to play in representing the interests of local and regional administrations in the newly created Interoperable Europe Board.

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### How it will be followed up

Practical arrangements of the functioning of the Interoperable Europe Board are currently in development.

**First-ever meeting of the CoR delegation with UN Secretary General Guterres at High-Level Political Forum in New York**

### Why it matters?

Increasing synergies of the CoR's work on climate, environment and the Sustainable Development Goals, which culminated with the successful participation of the CoR commission in the High-Level Political Forum on SDGs in New York, July 2023.

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### How it will be followed up

The CoR will continue developing this integrated approach in 2024, also boosting its internal reflection on the crosscutting dimensions of the Green Deal.

**Strong influence of the CoR opinions on the Critical Raw Materials Package and on the Short-Term Rental Sector on the European Parliament position**

### Why it matters?

The CoR aimed to build a visible position through the promotion of its opinions and by influencing the co-legislators, including during the trilogue negotiations, targeting the future involvement of LRAs and strengthening their voice in EU policy-making.

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### How it will be followed up

Aiming to secure a seat for the CoR, as the LRAs' representative, in relevant managing/monitoring bodies for European Critical Raw Materials Act and Net Zero Industry Act. The CoR will also closely follow up on the implementation of the regulation on short-term rentals and continue to engage with stakeholders and public authorities to evaluate the impact of the new law.





See more:

## The joint Horizon Europe and Interregional Innovation Investments call on Regional Innovation Valleys was launched by the European Commission

### Why it matters?

This responded to the CoR's appeal for better synergies between the regional policy funds and the Horizon programme in support of regional innovation.



### How it will be followed up

The European Parliament is currently preparing its contribution for the continuation of the Partnerships for Regional Innovation (PRI) in 2024, which will allow more regions to become involved, as the CoR has been requesting.

## Several agriculture and food policy related CoR opinions were highly reported in the European, national and local press

### Why it matters?

Both the CoR and EP reports underline the need to strengthen food security in the European Union and enhance the strategic autonomy and resilience of its agricultural sector while reducing our dependence on imports from third countries and diversifying the supply of critical imported products.



### How it will be followed up

The CoR will continue pleading for a framework law to facilitate the transition to more sustainable and healthy food systems, in cooperation with other relevant stakeholders, such as ICLEI or Eurocities.

## The CoR position in the opinion *Preparing for and dealing with crises: strengthening the resilience of the Union, its regions and cities* was largely echoed by the European Commission

### Why it matters?

The European Commission shared the CoR objectives, especially concerning societal preparedness and mapping of territorial vulnerabilities, while also highlighting the need to focus on the local level, since the EU is only as resilient as its cities and regions.

### How it will be followed up

The CoR will collaborate with the European Commission's Joint Research Centre in the development and publication of a vulnerability dashboard consisting of social, economic, political and environmental vulnerability indicators and capturing vulnerability to disasters across administrative levels and over time.

## Successful follow up of the Fit for 55 package, including pilot action to influence trilogues negotiations.

### Why it matters?

Several CoR proposals have been included in the final legislative texts, namely an enhanced support to the local energy production via renewable energy communities and strengthened multi-level governance (RED), and the inclusion of one-stop-shops for energy efficiency (EED) and the recognition of energy sharing schemes in the reform of the EU electricity market design.



### How it will be followed up

With the key Fit for 55 files now having reached the finish line, the CoR will look at the implementation of the Green Deal policies to ensure that targets and commitments set on paper have adequate resources and support on the ground.

## Promoting cohesion as a fundamental value of the EU

**The own-initiative opinion on *The future of cohesion policy post-2027* allowed the CoR to assume a pro-active role in the various discussions on the matter**

### Why it matters?

It allowed the CoR, as the first institution working on the matter, to assume a pro-active and leading role on the future of cohesion policy. The Council conclusions on the future of cohesion policy adopted by the General Affairs Council on 30 November took on board many aspects that were put forward by the (draft) CoR opinion as adopted by unanimity at the COTER meeting of 26 September (and plenary on 29 November).

### How it will be followed up

The CoR will continue its work on the future of cohesion policy, including by reacting to the 9th Cohesion Report (expected in March-April 2024) by means of an opinion, enhancing its cooperation with the European Parliament, reaching out to Member States and in particular the upcoming Council presidencies, as well as continuing its cooperation with the key partners in the renewed Cohesion Alliance.

**The CoR secured future ESPON support on Territorial Impact Assessment in the context of the new ESPON 2030 programme**

### Why it matters?

Since 2015, the CoR has organised 30 *ex ante* Territorial Impact Assessments (TIAs) with the support of ESPON. This concerns European Commission initiatives for which potential asymmetric impacts on the different EU territories may have been missed in the design phase.



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### How it will be followed up

The renewed ESPON support will enable the CoR to continue conducting TIA / Rural Proofing, thereby contributing to Better Regulation and supporting the “Do no harm to cohesion” principle (“no action should hamper the convergence process or contribute to regional disparities”).

**The Council Recommendation on developing social economy framework conditions includes several requests from the CoR opinion**

### Why it matters?

The CoR’s outlook opinion on *Creating an enabling environment for the social economy* helped to kickstart collective efforts to give the social economy higher priority, not only on the EU interinstitutional agenda, but also in the Member States. The subsequent European Commission Proposal and the adopted Council Recommendation included several of the CoR demands from the opinion.

### How it will be followed up

The CoR rapporteur continues the work on promoting the opinion and advocating for a more level playing field for the social economy to fully tap into its potential to deliver sustainable and inclusive local growth and services, including for the more remote/rural regions. Moreover, at the November conference on social economy, the CoR signed the San Sebastian Manifesto for the Social Economy, together with 19 Member States and the EESC.

**The European Parliament’s New European Bauhaus (NEB) Pilot Project on a voucher scheme was an EU action initiated by the CoR**

### Why it matters?

This role has solidified the Committee’s position as the advocate for local and regional interests in the NEB at EU level, and it has been acknowledged as a key partner in the successful implementation of the NEB. It shows how the CoR has had a substantial impact on policy work. The EP Pilot Project will receive EUR 1 450 000 on commitments and EUR 362 500 on payments.



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### How it will be followed up

The results and lessons learned from this project could feed into the work on long-term NEB financing. The operational activities under this Pilot Project would be implemented by the European Commission’s JRC, partnering with the European Committee of the Regions.





See more:

**The importance of the CoR's input to the report on a long-term vision for the EU's rural areas was publicly acknowledged at the High-Level Policy Forum under the Spanish presidency**

#### Why it matters?

The report contains several CoR positions such as the demand for a holistic approach for rural development using all existing EU funds, the demand for reconsidering the solutions for rural development in the future multiannual financial framework and earmarking in the future cohesion funds.



#### How it will be followed up

The CoR is represented in the Rural Pact's Coordination Group, providing strategic guidance to the work of the Pact and thus the implementation of the long-term vision.

**Campaigning for a just and sustainable transition for automotive regions through the CoR's Automotive Regions Alliance**

#### Why it matters?

The phasing out of internal combustion engine cars as of 2035 will have a profound effect on the regional automotive and supply industry. Through its Automotive Regions Alliance (ARA), the CoR has underlined the need for policy and budgetary measures for a just transition. The ARA and the CoR have been referred to explicitly in Regulation (EU) 2023/851 as the key partner to ensure a successful transition.



#### How it will be followed up

The CoR will continue to be the voice of the automotive regions at European level and make sure to fulfil its role attributed in Regulation (EU) 2023/851. The ARA will further consolidate its leading role as the key regional automotive network in Europe.

**The CoR was able to present its views in a crucial stage of the legislative process for the opinions *Towards zero emission road transport and Guidelines for the development of the trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T)***

#### Why it matters?

The CoR analysed the state of the negotiations and suggested concrete proposals for several issues that were still in negotiations, bringing in the regional dimension based on the relevant opinion.



#### How it will be followed up

The development in the negotiations is of crucial interest to the CoR to fulfil its obligations under the Treaty and represent regional interest in the European legislative process.

**The 21st edition of the European Week of Regions and Cities confirmed itself as the largest event dedicated to cohesion themes across the EU**

#### Why it matters?

The event provided an impactful platform to continue to mobilise all regions, cities and other stakeholders around the Cohesion Alliance, and to share ideas based on the CoR outlook opinion on the future of cohesion Policy.



#### How it will be followed up

Next year comes with the challenges of renewing the EU's strategic agenda, the European elections and the institutional renewal of politicians in all three main institutions. CoR efforts will focus on conceiving and implementing a successful EURegionsWeek in 2024.

## Supporting Ukraine, an overarching priority of the CoR



See more:

**The European Parliament referred to the European Alliance of Cities and Regions and it highlighted the CoR's guiding principles in its Resolution on the sustainable reconstruction and integration of Ukraine into the Euro-Atlantic community**

### Why it matters?

The European Alliance of Cities and Regions for the Reconstruction of Ukraine launched by the CoR in partnership with the EU and Ukrainian associations of LRAs with the aim to coordinate joint efforts directed towards helping the recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine, has experienced continuous growth, strengthening cooperation among partners and expanding the collective impact of their action.

### How it will be followed up

The activity of the Alliance is constantly progressing and the CoR is promoting the principles of the Ukrainian reconstruction process in the run-up to the Ukraine Recovery Conference 2024.

**The CoR has promoted the summer camps for Ukrainian children initiative further by increasing coordination efforts and reaching out to partners**

### Why it matters?

It has contributed to welcoming more than 3 000 children in 2023, compared to 1 250 in 2022, in diverse cities and regions all over the EU.



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### How it will be followed up

The CoR will continue to invest in the coordination and negotiation process with its members, associations and Ukrainian partners in order to extend the summer camps initiative throughout 2024.

**The CoR, representing the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for the Reconstruction of Ukraine, participated for the first time in the 2023 London Ukraine Recovery Conference (URC). CoR political representatives visited Kyiv and Lviv, to support LRAs on the field**

### Why it matters?

The role of LRAs in the reconstruction of Ukraine has been recognised at the highest international level.



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### How it will be followed up

The CoR will continue to work with the URC organisers and bodies bringing together EU and Ukrainian cities and regions to maintain the focus on the local and regional dimension of reconstruction.

**The European Parliament reflected several recommendations of the CoR opinion in its report on the establishment of the Ukraine Facility**

### Why it matters?

The European Parliament is supporting the CoR's calls to take into account the partnership principle, to meaningfully involve LRAs in the implementation of the Ukraine Facility, and to upgrade the role of the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for the Reconstruction of Ukraine.

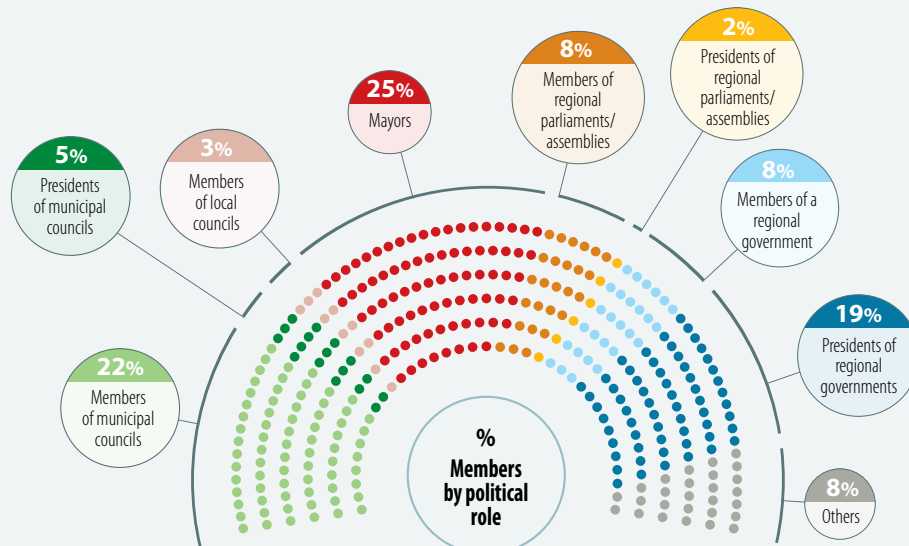
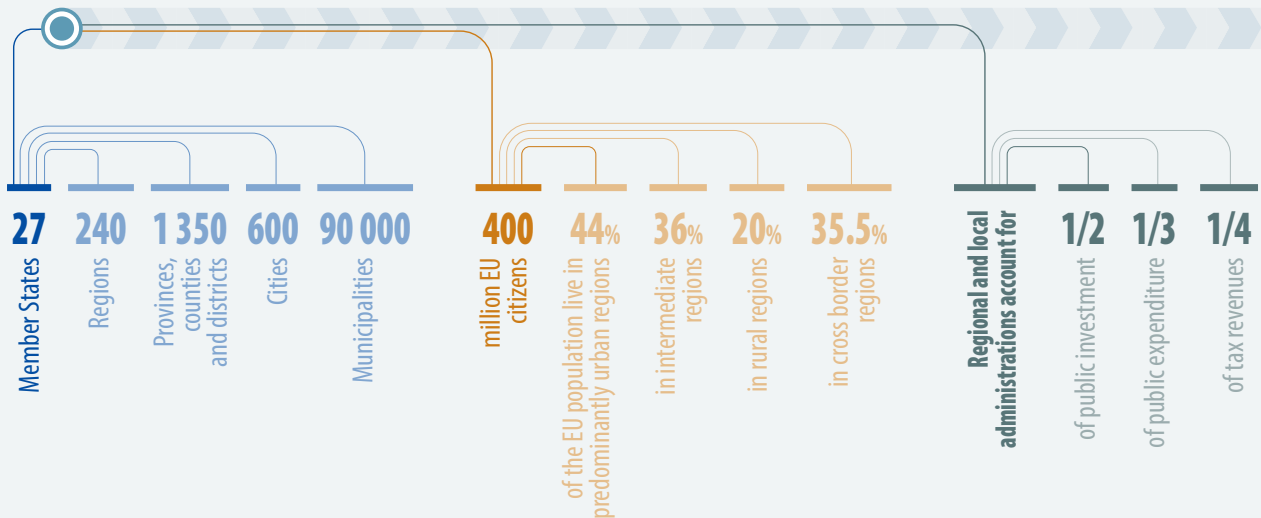


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### How it will be followed up

The CoR will continue to follow the developments and monitor the implementation of the Ukraine Facility, as well as of the recently revised roadmap to decentralisation.

## The regions and cities of the European Union





**European Committee  
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Created in 1994, after the entry into force of the Maastricht Treaty, the European Committee of the Regions is the EU's assembly of 329 regional and local representatives from all 27 Member States, representing over 447 million Europeans.

Its main objectives are to involve regional and local authorities and the communities they represent in the EU's decision-making process and to inform them about EU policies. The European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council have to consult the Committee in policy areas affecting regions and cities. It can appeal to the Court of Justice of the European Union as a means of upholding EU law where there are breaches to the subsidiarity principle or failures to respect regional or local authorities.

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