



European Committee
of the Regions

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The European Committee of the Regions and the Austrian Presidency of the Council of the European Union



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Foreword



BY KARL-HEINZ LAMBERTZ, PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

Austria takes over the EU Presidency at a time when the stakes are high for the future of the European Union. It is not only the stuttering Brexit negotiations the Austrian Presidency must contend with during its 6-month Presidency, but the future EU budget after 2020, the impasse on migration and begin preparations for the change in the European Commission and European Parliament next year. For local and regional governments and their citizens, the decisions made during this period will shape the future direction of our Union.

Through nearly 200 local dialogues the European Committee of the Regions have held in cities, regions and towns across Europe, citizens are asking for more cohesion, more solidarity and more proximity. The European Union needs to be united in its determination to create jobs in every corner of Europe and foster territorial cohesion.

If Europe is to demonstrate that it can protect people, it needs to become more competitive delivering equally on its promise of both economic and social progression. For regions and cities, this means setting an ambitious EU budget that reduces regional disparities, supports major digital and transport infrastructure projects, re-trains more people so they can return to the labour market, integrates migrants, boosts innovation; and tackles climate change.

To achieve this it needs to give regions and cities the right means. This is why our Committee together with over 5,000 supporters representing 97% of the EU population, the Cohesion Alliance launched in October last year, demands that cohesion policy – EU regional policy – continues to make up one-third of the EU budget for all regions, rich and poor. We all agree that Europe is facing new challenges, but the proposals to cut cohesion policy by 10% and centralise funds takes Europe down the wrong road undermining the ability of regions and cities to deliver a local Europe led by solidarity.

The Austrian Presidency has placed subsidiarity – the principle that decisions should be taken closest to its citizens – as a key objective, something that is most welcome. The EU needs to show it can change and can reform within, which means improving the quality, effectiveness and impact of its laws. Regions and cities are responsible for delivering 70% of EU legislation and understand their benefits, but are sometimes worried about their density and complexity. The European Commission launched a Task Force on Subsidiarity bringing together national parliaments and local and regional authorities whom were represented by our Committee. The Task Force recommendations offer a new way of working to improve the level of engagement of every level of government and the EU institutions. It is not about less Europe, but a better functioning Europe. We hope these important ideas are taken on-board in the shared effort to create a better, more effective and cohesive European future.

The European Committee of the Regions – the EU's assembly of 350 local and regional leaders, including an active and strong Austrian delegation of 12 members and 12 alternates – is fully committed to working with the Austrian EU Presidency in helping bridging the gap between the EU and citizens, to improve legislation and create a common, stronger Europe that leaves no one behind.

Foreword



GERNOT BLÜMEL, FEDERAL MINISTER FOR THE EU, ARTS, CULTURE AND MEDIA

Austria is taking over the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union for the third time after 1998 and 2006 which is a challenge and a great honor at the same time. We are living in an era of major changes. Current developments in international affairs seem to increase uncertainty and anxiety, economic and social foundations are being shaken by the forces of globalization and digitalization, the European Union has to face internal problems and needs to answer pressing external questions.

Developments in recent years have had a negative impact on the trust of citizens in the Union. That trend needs to be reversed and it is more important than ever to tackle the topics which are important to European Citizens. The key aim of the EU was and always will be to guarantee Peace and Stability. Therefore the general theme of the Austrian Council Presidency is “A Europe that protects”.

Together with our Trio partners Estonia and Bulgaria we have delivered an ambitious work programme, addressing major challenges the Union is facing. As the last partner of the current trio, it will be one of Austria’s priorities to finalize as many open dossiers as manageable. We want to contribute as much as possible to decisive progress before the European elections in late spring 2019.

Our programme is based on three pillars.

The first pillar is “**Security and fight against illegal migration**”. This remains a major challenge for the EU and its Member States. It is of utmost importance that the EU is able and capable to act. Significant progress has already been achieved but strong and sustainable solutions regarding the protection of external borders, fighting terrorism and preventing radicalisation still have to be found. These challenges can only be successfully met if we work together on the European level.

The second pillar of the Austrian programme is “**Securing prosperity and competitiveness – focus on digitalization**”. The EU is still one of the leading trading powers as well as the biggest single market in the world. The digital transformation is a powerful development, which has to be used to secure the EU’s prosperity and competitiveness, as well as the sustainability of the EU’s economy. Trust of our citizens in the digital world has to be strengthened and the Union needs to possess the necessary tools to counter cyber threats. At the same time, we need to ensure a level playing field which includes a European response to the dominant position of global internet corporations.

The third pillar of the Austrian programme is “**Stability in the neighbourhood – EU perspective of the Western Balkans / Southeast-Europe**”. This is and will remain a traditional priority of Austria. We will build on progress achieved during the Bulgarian EU Presidency and support all efforts for a continued integration of the region in the European structures.

Austria’s approach in all these efforts will be based on the **reinforcement of the principle of subsidiarity**. This principle has not always been coherently and effectively applied. We therefore welcome the establishment of the “Task Force on subsidiarity, proportionality and doing less more efficiently” and look forward to its findings. Austria believes that the EU has to focus on essential issues and challenges, where common solutions are necessary. At the same time, the Union has to take a step back on smaller issues, leaving room for regional and national solutions – and, by doing so, live up to its own motto “United in Diversity”.

The Committee of the Regions (CoR) plays an important role in particular regarding the fostering of the Principle of Subsidiarity. It portrays the perspective of regions and cities and does bring the views of local and regional authorities to the attention of the European level. Its Members are closest to the demands and needs of the European Citizens. The Austrian Presidency highly values the role of the CoR, as nowhere else the diversity of the Union is better represented, and we are looking forward to a close cooperation and a fruitful exchange of views.

Austria is determined to contributing to our common European agenda. I am confident that together we will be able to achieve progress on those issues which are close to our citizens, making the Union stronger and more efficient.

'A Europe that protects' – Priorities of the Austrian Presidency of the Council of the European Union

The Austrian Presidency of the Council of the European Union will focus on security and the fight against illegal migration, securing prosperity and competitiveness through digitalisation, and stability in the European neighbourhood.

The **motto** of the Austrian Presidency is 'A Europe that protects'. In order to achieve this objective, Austria's approach will be based on enhancing the principle of subsidiarity. The European Union should focus on big issues which require a joint solution and take a step back when it comes to smaller issues where member states or regions are in a better position to take decisions. This approach aims at taking seriously the motto of the European Union, 'United in Diversity'.

To that effect, the Austrian Presidency will prioritise the protective role of the European Union, in particular concerning three priority areas:

- Security and the fight against illegal migration
- Securing prosperity and competitiveness through digitalisation
- Stability in the European neighbourhood – EU perspective of the Western Balkans/South Eastern Europe

Austria views its role during the forthcoming Council Presidency as that of a neutral broker. Given its geographic location in the heart of the EU, its obligation of neutrality and in line with its traditional role as bridge builder, Austria will endeavour to contribute to the unity within the EU during its Council Presidency.

The European Committee of the Regions' Communication Plan 2018

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP FOR A LOCAL EUROPE.

Short version of the political priorities and campaigns

The European Committee of the Regions (CoR) pursues a communication approach that is based on the principle of “reconnecting Europe with its citizens through focused, two-way communication centered on its members”. In so doing, the CoR develops its communication activities in partnership and cooperation with a “network-of-networks” involving its members, associations and local and regional governments and their networks on the one hand and the EU institutions, in particular the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Council and their networks on the other.

The 2018 Communication Plan considers the President’s ambition of improving the role and impact of the CoR, based on more visibility and enhanced cooperation and communication, in particular with regional and local authorities and their European associations. It concentrates on the three political priorities of the current mandate: Europe of the citizens; A new start for the economy of the EU; Stability and cohesion.

The political context for the CoR communication 2018/19 is dominated by the debate on the Future of Europe, the European Commission’s proposal for a MFF for the EU post-2020 and the European Parliament’s election in 2019.

Therefore the CoR implements its communication activities through three campaigns to enhance the visibility and impact of the assembly’s EU legislative work:

Campaign 1: Regions, cities and local authorities working for the future of Europe

Campaign 2: Investing in sustainable growth and jobs in all regions, cities and local authorities

Campaign 3: EU regions, cities and local authorities as change agents

Beyond the three campaigns, adequate coverage of the legislative work and other institutional activities will ensure the availability of information sources which promise to have the greatest impact. This includes, for example, the CoR’s involvement in the European Year of Cultural Heritage.

During the Austrian Presidency of the Council of the European Union the CoR will organise /or actively participate in several events. The Bureau of the European Committee of the Regions will meet on 14 September in Innsbruck. There will be a conference on cross-border cooperation on 9 November in Klagenfurt and a citizens’ dialogue with CoR Members at the University of Innsbruck on 22 November.

A Word from the Austrian Delegation to the Committee of the Regions

After decades of neglect of the regions in the process of European integration, the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) was established in 1994 on the basis of a joint initiative of the regions of Europe – and especially the regions with legislative powers – as a body to provide local and regional authorities with a voice in the European legislative process. The CoR not only issues opinions at the request of the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission; it can also draw up opinions of its own volition relating to issues of concern to local and regional authorities in the European debate. In addition, the CoR has been substantially strengthened through the right to refer breaches of the principle of subsidiarity in European legislation to the European Court of Justice.

The Austrian delegation comprises twelve full members and twelve alternate members. They are nominated by the regions, cities and municipalities, whose interests they represent in Brussels. The municipalities and regions are closest to the needs and concerns of the people. The CoR accordingly fulfils the extremely important role of bridging the lamented gap between the European Union and its citizens and bringing Europe closer to them.

The concerns at the focus of the work of the Austrian CoR delegation cover all aspects of daily life, from finance and regional development to education and health, environment and transport.

Austria has traditionally attached particular importance to strengthening cross-border cooperation and multilevel governance. The major challenges of our time, like globalisation, demographic change, climate change, and the greening of transport, can only be tackled and mastered together. It is no coincidence that the EGTC Regulation, the basis under European law for institutionalised cross-border cooperation between regions and municipalities, was finalised during the Austrian EU Presidency in 2006. Austria was also instrumental in creating the legal basis for the development of European macro-regional strategies. In the most recent, the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP), the states and regions of the Alps work together on an equal footing with the support of the European Commission and with the involvement of the Alpine Convention, local authorities and the civil society. To that extent, a macro-regional strategy can be considered a living expression of multilevel governance.

The European Union will have a future if we can rekindle people's enthusiasm for our common concerns and ideas. In this context, the regions and municipalities have an indispensable part to play: the municipalities and regions need Europe, but Europe also needs the municipalities and regions!



A word from the Austrian National Coordinators



According to Rules of Procedure, the National Coordinators support the National Delegations and the members of the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) in the exercise of their duties. Their essential sphere of competence is situated at the interface between the members and the services of the CoR, in particular the Secretariat General. They are responsible for guaranteeing the flow of information both

between the Members and the CoR and within the National Delegation. One of the main tasks is their contribution in the process of the appointment and resignation of members. To cut a long story short, the National Coordinators ensure a comprehensive coordination of all matters regarding the relation of the members and the CoR.

Usually, the National Coordinators are assistants to the political Head of the CoR's National Delegation. Austria has a particular position, as one of the two coordinators is the Head of Department Länder Affairs at the Permanent Representation of Austria to the European Union in Brussels. That particularity facilitates the division of tasks and responsibilities between Austria and Brussels but at the same time it requires a close and trusting cooperation.

In the runup to CoR plenary sessions in Brussels, as well as of the extraordinary Meeting of the Bureau in the Member State holding the Chair, there are regular coordination meetings with the administration of the CoR, the Secretary General, and the cabinet of the CoR President. These meetings are preceded by internal meetings of the coordinators, whereas the Chair is held by one of them. When required, further coordination meetings are held during the plenaries, either with the whole group of coordinators or with the so called contact group only. Thanks to the experience of long standing National Coordinators, all these meetings are characterized by a high degree of self organization and prompt and informal cooperation.

These procedures are of mutual benefit for both the National Delegations and the Secretariat General. The latter is provided i.e. with a common mood of the Delegations regarding the current agenda, and practical question regarding organizational issues. On fundamental issues, National Coordinators may hand in elaborated opinions of their respective delegation.

We would like to express our deepest gratitude towards our colleagues of the nine Austrian Länder, the Austrian Association of Cities, the Austrian Association of Municipalities, as well as of the CoR administration. It has ensured that we take the best approach in delivering a sound, transparent and mutually advantageous contribution to the third Austrian EU Presidency. This successful work is a plain example of team spirit and excellent coordination at all levels. Coordination means cooperation – that's what they all offered to us.

Prof. Dr. Klemens H. Fischer
Minister plenipotentiary

Dr. Fritz Staudigl
Director

The Republic of Austria - a federal state

AUSTRIA IS A FEDERAL STATE COMPRISING NINE REGIONS AND 2,098 MUNICIPALITIES.

The Länder (federal regions) and their capitals are: Burgenland (Eisenstadt), Carinthia (Klagenfurt), Lower Austria (St. Pölten), Upper Austria (Linz), Salzburg (Salzburg), Styria (Graz), Tyrol (Innsbruck), Vorarlberg (Bregenz), Vienna (Vienna).

The federal system of the Republic of Austria is based on the regions as public authorities with their own legislative and executive powers, the participation in federal legislation and their financial independence of the federal state.

Under the Austrian Federal Constitution, all state legislative, judicial and administrative powers are shared between the federal state and the regions. In the field of legislation, the federal state can only enact laws in areas in which its authority is enshrined in the constitution. Where that is not the case, the regions alone have the power to create their own laws for the spheres of life involved. Every region has a regional parliament (Landtag), which exercises the legislative powers vested in the region. As a rule, the members of the regional parliaments are elected every five years in free general elections. Each regional parliament elects a regional government headed by the Governor (Landeshauptmann), who also represents the region externally.

The regional authorities play a particularly important role in the execution and implementation of laws. They administer the laws enacted by the regional parliaments and in many areas the laws enacted by the national legislator within a system of indirect or delegated federal administration.

In addition to their own legislative and administrative activities, the regions also play an important role in national legislation and in the EU's subsidiarity control procedure via the Federal Council (Bundesrat), the second chamber of the Federal Parliament comprised of delegates nominated by the regional parliaments.

The regions also have participatory rights in other matters relating to the European Union: Where the regions issue a uniform opinion on a European Union project concerning matters in which legislative authority is vested in the regions, the federal government may only deviate from that opinion during negotiations and voting at the EU for compelling reasons relating to integration and foreign policy. Where an EU project concerns matters in which legislative authority is vested in the regions, the federal government may appoint a member of a regional government nominated by the regions to represent Austria in the Council of the EU. Furthermore, regional representatives can be included in delegations for EU negotiations at the request of the regional authorities. Finally, the regions are entitled to second their own personnel to the Permanent Representation of Austria to the EU.

The municipal level

The municipalities and cities are primarily responsible for fulfilling the tasks of local government within their purview but they also perform federal and regional administrative tasks delegated to them. As the smallest organisational units of the state, they have no legislative authority, but they have the power to issue local ordinances and bylaws. The principle of local self-government is enshrined in the Austrian constitution.

The municipalities and cities are affiliated to two umbrella associations, the Austrian Association of Cities and the Austrian Association of Municipalities.

Austrian Association of Cities and Towns

The Austrian Association of Cities and Towns (AACT) is the representation of interests of Austrian cities and bigger municipalities with central functions. It represents the municipal concerns in urban regions. It was founded 1915 when 58 cities and towns came together to manage the problems which were generated as consequence of the First World War. It was refounded in 1946 and has 255 member municipalities in which live around 60% of the Austrian population.

It is mentioned in the Austrian Federal Constitution together with the Austrian Association of Municipalities. Both Associations complement one another to a strong representation of interests of all 2098 Austrian cities and municipalities.

The AACT has international activities, too. Representatives are nominated to the CoR and The Congress (Council of Europe) in close cooperation with the Austrian Association of Municipalities. The AACT is an active member of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR).

The European unification is an important object of AACT. Numerous projects were implemented since 1989 in cooperation with the Local Government Associations in the countries eastern of the former Iron Curtain. The recent example is the three year project BACID (Building Administrative Capacity in the Danube Region; www.bacid.eu) Activities for the development of the governance on the local level in the countries of the Western Balkans and the Republic of Moldova.

More information under www.steadtebund.gv.at

The Austrian Association of Municipalities

The Austrian Association of Municipalities represents the interests of 2,089 Austrian municipalities and thus ensures, together with the Austrian Association of Cities, the representation of interests of all 2098 Austrian local governments. Its function as a representative body is enshrined in the Federal Constitution. At federal level, the Austrian Association of Municipalities participates in the negotiations about the financial equalisation mechanism and in matters of administrative reform, education policy, infrastructure or health.

Since EU law must be implemented at local level, the Austrian Association of Municipalities also actively participates in the work of the European umbrella organization CEMR and in the Committee of the Regions. Furthermore, it makes use of its right to influence the positions of the Austrian Federal Government in matters of the European Union that are relevant for local governments.

But defending strong local self government goes further. Three delegates in the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (Council of Europe) commit themselves to the principles enshrined in the European Charter of Local Self Government and thus follow a historic tradition as the Austrian Association of Municipalities supported the Charter from the very beginning.

In 2017, the Austrian Association of Municipalities celebrated its 70th anniversary. Much has been achieved over the years, including the introduction of the consultation mechanism to secure sound financial foundations of local governments. However, experience shows that the rights enshrined in the European Charter of Local Self Government are not guaranteed for all times. Local governments will continue to rely on strong partners in order to inform and communicate about the importance of local self government at national and European level. The Committee of the Regions definitely is such a partner.

More information on: <https://gemeindebund.at/>

Decision-making in the EU



Obligatory consultation of the CoR



CoR Commissions

6 Commissions (groups of Members) prepare draft opinions, reports and resolutions to be submitted to the Plenary Assembly.



How CoR opinions are created



Output

over 70% of **EU legislation** has a direct impact at local or regional level



In 2017, the CoR passed:





European Committee
of the Regions

The Members of the Austrian Delegation to the CoR



"The European Union goals are not to be achieved in Brussels, Luxemburg or Straßburg but throughout its citizens. Regarding the European multilevel governance system, the regional and local authorities link them directly to the European Union's institutions, especially to the European Commission. In order to achieve European integration and sustainable economic and social development within the EU, we have to focus regional characteristics."

Christian ILLEDITS, CoR member
Burgenland

President of the State Parliament

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"I stand for a peaceful, economic and strong Europe, based on research and innovation, where social justice prevails. Our EU is at a cross roads: Brexit with its multiple effects, as well as increasing nationalism, which is affecting the EU's capacity to act, demonstrate clearly that we can only together, as a strong and united Union, successfully meet global challenges like climate change and digitalization, as well as the repercussions of migration."

Together, we are at the forefront of research and innovation; the 1.6 billion Euro investment by Infineon in the Villach location testifies to trust as well as to the willingness to further expand existing competences. Investing in research and innovation means investing in the future of Europe.

United, we can manage to successfully tackle the crucial social issues that arise from these questions – education for digital skills, work organization, jobs and economic competitiveness.

What we need is a debate about how Europe should be designed in the future, so we can guarantee its democratic advancement in the spirit of the European citizens."

Dr. Peter Kaiser, CoR member
Carinthia

Governor

Political group: PES

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"The European Committee of the Regions is an important institution, as it makes visible and present regional diversity at European level - it gives voice to the cities and regions of the European Union and acts as an interface between local, regional and European policy, so that Europe is designed close to the citizens according to the bottom-up-principle."

Hans Niessl, CoR alternate member
Burgenland

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"Important and groundbreaking decisions are made in Europe: the debate on the multiannual financial framework beyond 2020 will also determine how future EU funding will shape the competitiveness of European regions and the design of a social Europe. It is important to make it clear that even the economically strong regions of the EU are facing major challenges and therefore need to receive sufficient EU funds in the future in order to compete economically on an international level. The social dimension of Europe should be strengthened, inter alia, by the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights so that the EU can be a citizen-centered Union."

Herwig Seiser, CoR alternate member
Carinthia

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"People can better and more directly feel Europe in the region. Lower Austria has always been a region that looks beyond its own borders and builds regional networks at international level, like for example the successful initiatives for the prolongation of EU Cohesion Policy for all regions in 2010 and 2011 and now in 2016 and 2018. Those common partnerships show that regions in Europe can achieve a lot if they act together. With the Cohesion Alliance, the Committee of the Regions has taken on a new role particularly important in the future for the regions and for a Europe of the future close to its citizens."

FLH Mag. Johanna Mikl-Leitner, CoR member
Lower Austria

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"Lower Austria gets a strong voice in Brussels through the "Committee of the Regions". My mission is to commit myself to a simplified Cohesion Policy post 2020. The EU cannot reach its objectives alone but only together with the regions.

That is why it is necessary to have a close cooperation with the regions, municipalities, districts and cities to further build a citizen-friendly European Union."

LR Dr. Martin Eichtinger, CoR alternate member
Lower Austria

Member of Government for Housing,
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"Europe is a fragile and complex entity of nations, regions, cities and municipalities with diverse conditions. Hence, cohabitation and decision making within the European Union can only succeed if these differences are being treated with caution and if citizens feel that decisions of EU-authorities are not being made over their heads. It is for this precise reason that the representation of regional and municipal interests by the Committee Of Regions does not solely serve as a warrantor for the proximity of citizens to European politics, but it is also a fundamental contribution for the existence and future viability of the Union."

Dr. Michael Strugl, MBA, CoR member
Upper Austria

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"Owing to its regional and municipal composition the Committee of Regions is predestined to safeguard a maxim which the European Union has declared as one of its main principles with good reason: the principle of subsidiarity. The idea that the Union shall only act if and in so far as the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States, either at central, regional or local level, is nothing less but the central key to cooperation between the Union and Member States, regions and municipalities. Thanks to this approach of differentiation, the Committee's work unites the interests of all political levels and illustrates the benefit of union wide regulations to the European People."

Viktor Sigl, Alt. Member CoR
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"My main emphasis in the Committee of the Regions has been on Institutional and External Affairs for many years. Moreover, I am a member of the IG Regions with Legislative Powers. Furthermore, as chairman of the CoR's Western Balkans Working Group, I am primarily involved with the EU enlargement countries of South-East Europe. Therefore, I am actively engaged in the "Enlargement Days" of the CoR and have prepared, amongst other things, numerous opinions on the EU Enlargement Strategy."

Univ.-Prof. Dr. Franz Schausberger, CoR member
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"The Committee of the Regions is the voice of the local and regional level in Europe. We, the (alternate) members of the CoR, make sure that the regional and local point of view is considered in the European decision making process. Moreover I see my role as an ambassador of diversity and regional differences in Europe. I mainly focus on Commission SEDEC (Social Policy, Education, Employment, Research and Culture) and like being actively engaged in its work."

Dr. Brigitta Pallauf, CoR alternate member
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"Cooperation is an essential tool for a positive future for the European regions. I am convinced that there is still further potential for closer cooperation from which all regions can benefit. We shall intensify existing contacts and develop new networks. As a Member of the CoR I will do all my best to reach that goal."

Barbara Eibinger-Miedl, CoR member
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"Europe needs a fair and solid social basis. This is what makes our European Union strong and can reinforce people's confidence in the European project. As a Minister of the Styrian government, responsible for social affairs, as a convinced European and as a European Committee of the Regions rapporteur, I fight for a social Europe. In this respect, I am convinced that a European Labour Authority will greatly contribute towards making Europe fairer for workers, creating a level playing field for employers and ultimately benefiting all European regions and it's citizens."

Doris Kampus, CoR alternate member
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"The municipalities and regions are directly confronted on a daily basis with the citizens' wishes and expectations in the political sphere. They have a special asset in their direct experience of the practical effects of European law. The European Committee of the Regions provides local and regional authorities with a platform where they can directly input their interests into the European legislative process and help determine the final result. Such direct participation is important to ensure respect for cultural identities and regional specificities in Brussels and enhance the quality and acceptance of decisions taken at the European level."

Günther Platter, CoR member

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"Thanks to its central location in Europe and its role as a hub between North and South, East and West, the Tyrol has always been a pioneer of interregional and cross-border cooperation. Together with our partners in the CoR, we are able to safeguard our rights of participation and insist on respect for the principle of subsidiarity. This applies in particular to the current debates on the future of the EU and the multiannual financial framework. In this context, the CoR articulates regional knowledge and experience and inputs it into the European legislative process. Conversely, the members of the CoR communicate EU objectives and achievements to the regions."

Sonja Ledl-Rossmann, CoR alternate member

Tyrol

President of the State Parliament of Tyrol

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"I am firmly convinced that a further strengthening of the regions will have a positive effect on the development of the European Union. To this purpose, policy in Europe must focus more intensely than hitherto on the principle of subsidiarity, which means more self-responsibility for the states and regions on the one hand, however, on the other hand, an improved capacity of acting and a higher efficiency for the challenging European agenda regarding economy, research, security or the common struggle against illegal migration. The strengthening of subsidiarity and the contact with our immediate neighbouring regions are consequently major priorities in the work of Vorarlberg in the Committee of the Regions."

Mag. Markus Wallner, CoR member

Vorarlberg

President of the State Government

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"We face the big challenge to make Austria fit for the future. This means, that we try to continue and optimise proven traditions, to simplify some things, but above all, to increase efficiency and flexibility. The involvement of the regions with their specific points of view will essentially contribute to a sustainable development in the right direction. Therefore, we must make sure in the Committee of the Regions that the small ones will sufficiently be heard in the concert of the major players. Lived subsidiarity and federal structures are the keys to future European success. They will allow identification, self-responsibility and acceptance by the citizens – to make a long story short: they will provide the urgently required trust in our common Europe."

Mag. Harald Sonderegger, CoR alternate member

Vorarlberg

President of the State Parliament of Vorarlberg

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"Well-functioning services of public interest are a key element of liveable attractive cities for their inhabitants. Vienna is a pioneer in this respect. With the growth of our cities these services have to develop too."

Dr. Michael Ludwig, CoR member

Vienna

Mayor

Political Group: PES

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"Only an active, long-term investment policy can add and ensure to the quality of life, thus the social balance and, ultimately, a peaceful coexistence in our cities. Public investment benefits people and the real economy."

Peter Hanke, CoR alternate member

Vienna

Member of the City Government of Vienna, responsible for

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"Not only Austria, but the whole of Europe is blessed with a unique cultural and natural heritage in our municipalities. On a European level, the Committee of the Regions is the driving force to launch initiatives that bring this heritage closer to our citizens."

In addition to advocating for the protection of local self-government and an EU-legislation that respects the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, I see direct contacts with citizens as an important task of the Committee of the Regions and its members."

Hanspeter Wagner, CoR member
Austrian Association of Municipalities
 Mayor of Breitenwand (Tyrol)
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"The regional diversity of Europe should be seen both as an opportunity and a challenge for the European Union. In order to foster European cohesion, solidarity and subsidiarity must go hand in hand more than ever before. The Committee of the Regions is a strong institutional voice for cities, municipalities and regions. But each local and regional government should also communicate with their citizens and speak about the added value of European policies."

Hannes Weninger, CoR member
Austrian Association of Municipalities
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 Member of the City Council of Gießhübl and Member of the State Parliament of Lower Austria
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"Europe comprises of around 100.000 local governments, in many countries they are responsible for the provision of basic services of general interest such as water supply and waste removal. The Committee of the Regions has the responsibility to inform the European Institutions about the challenges of implementing EU-law on a local and regional level. Furthermore, the CoR must influence the legislative process in a way to secure that implementation is feasible even in the smallest municipality."

Carmen Kiefer, CoR alternate member
Austrian Association of Municipalities
 Political Group: EPP
 Deputy Mayor of Kuchl (Salzburg)
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"Europe was shaped significantly by the variety of its cities, where great ideas have their origins for centuries and cities will continue to be the engines of the future of Europe. My hometown of St. Pölten has been committed to the European idea for long time and was honoured by the Council of Europe with the Europe Prize in the year 2001. I see the application of St. Pölten as "European Capital of Culture 2024" and my commitment to the Committee of Regions as a further opportunity to continue this tradition and to actively contribute the voice of the cities in shaping the European future."

Mag. Matthias Stadler, CoR member
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"Cities and towns are centres which in tiny interaction with their surrounding region, but also with each other. This is especially true of the Vorarlberg regional capital Bregenz, the Bregenzer Wald region, the cities in Vorarlberg and around Lake Constance. As a member of the Committee of Regions, my goal at European level is to help cities, towns and regions to fulfil these tasks in the best possible way for the benefit of all."

Dipl.-Ing. Markus Linhart, CoR alternate member
Austrian Association of Cities and Towns
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"Europe's major cities, which include Vienna as the second largest city in the German-speaking world, are experiencing steady growth. They therefore face great challenges. In the future, too, it will be up to the population to offer municipal services of optimum quality in order not to secure the quality of life, but to expand it. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to improve the EU's financial requirements for investment in services of general interest in the interests of local and regional authorities. Therefore, a strong Committee of the Regions is needed to ensure that new regulations are in the interest of cities and towns."

Peter Florianschütz, CoR alternate member
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European Committee of the Regions

Created in 1994 following the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, the European Committee of the Regions is the EU's assembly of 350 regional and local representatives from all 28 Member States, representing over 507 million Europeans. Its mission is 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 are obliged to consult the Committee in policy areas affecting regions and cities. It can appeal to the Court of Justice of the European Union if its rights are infringed or it believes that EU law infringes the subsidiarity principle or fails to respect regional or local powers.

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