

ECR GROUP ACHIEVEMENTS 2020-2025

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European Committee
of the Regions



ECR
EUROPEAN CONSERVATIVES
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COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

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Foreword

During the first part of the concluding CoR mandate, I had the honour of serving as President of the ECR Group. The period from January 2020 to mid-2022 was exceptionally challenging for Europe, as the continent faced significant political and economic turmoil driven by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pandemic's profound impact on public health rippled through nearly every aspect of our lives, reshaping economies and testing the resilience of our societies. As the continent began recovering in 2021, Europe was soon confronted with another crisis: Russia's military invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, triggering a refugee crisis, and escalating geopolitical tensions.

The war also disrupted global energy markets, exacerbating inflation and once more testing Europe's resilience and unity. The EU regions have played a crucial role in both crises by providing localised responses, implementing support measures, and adapting to rapidly changing circumstances. I am proud that Europe's conservative local and regional leaders' actions have been essential in mitigating the impacts of the pandemic and the conflict in Ukraine on local communities and economies.

The ECR CoR Group once again proved to be a constructive force, led by pragmatism and a strong sense of responsibility towards all citizens during these testing times.



Władysław Ortyl

(ECR Group President, February 2020 to June 2022)

I have the honour of serving as ECR Group President in the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) since July 2022. At the time of taking up my function, the European continent was relentlessly facing crisis after crisis including a global pandemic, soaring energy prices and Russia's unjustified aggression against Ukraine.

However, each and every one of these difficulties and obstacles continues to reaffirm the need for our presence in Brussels. I would like to take this opportunity to warmly acknowledge the efforts made by the members of our Group during the last mandate in promoting the voice of common sense within the CoR and in defending traditions and the principle of subsidiarity despite the numerous challenges we have been facing. Our members have tirelessly worked in promoting conservative values and reformist policies as well as local decision-making be it through adopted CoR opinions or at high-level conferences and events. I am very proud of the work carried out to protect the automotive sector, a key pillar of the EU economy, and I am convinced that only a just transition based on technology neutrality could be really beneficial for all EU regions.

During the last mandate, our Group has gone from strength to strength and today we count close to 60 members hailing from nine EU Member States. In 2023, the Group celebrated 10 years since its founding and the aim for the next mandate and years to come is to continue to bring our common-sense perspective to European policy.

We reaffirm our vision of a Europe that is just and fair, economically prosperous and true to its values. We want to see less contentious and burdensome legislation in the next mandate and we will continue to ensure that our voices are better heard and reflected in EU-level discussions and decisions.



Marco Marsilio
(ECR Group President, July 2022 to present)

Opinions by ECR members during CoR mandate 2020 - 2025

CIVEX

1. Enlargement Package 2021 150th plenary session, 29-30 June 2022 - **Anna Magyar**



The opinion calls for all Western Balkan countries as well as Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia to join the EU as soon as possible provided they meet the accession criteria. The adoption of the opinion was very timely as it followed a historic decision of the European Council to grant the status of candidate country to Ukraine and to the Republic of Moldova. Furthermore, the opinion stresses that no public administration reform can be implemented without good governance at local level, and that the European Commission should increasingly take this into account by adapting its support measures accordingly.

2. Enlargement package 2022 156th plenary session, 5-6 July 2023 - **Anna Magyar**

The opinion stresses the historic opportunity that the new geopolitical context offers to candidate countries. It calls for investing greater time and effort in support for local administrations, economic ties and peer-to-peer capacity-building instruments. Furthermore, the opinion stresses that a successful enlargement policy is as much in the EU's interest as it is for those countries that see their future as part of the common European project.



3. EU roadmap to fight drug trafficking and organised crime 161st plenary session, 19-20 June 2024 – **Matteo Luigi Bianchi**



The opinion identifies prevention as the main aspect on which most local and regional authorities could immediately intensify their efforts involving local communities, families, schools, social services, civil society, law enforcement agencies, and private companies, to mitigate risks of deaths from illegal substance overdoses across Member States. Fighting drug trafficking in Europe and the EU's most notorious criminal networks is one of the areas where a coordinated EU action is justified and widely supported.

COTER

1. European Year of Rail 2021 140th plenary session, 12-13 October 2020 - Jarosław Stawiarski

The opinion – adopted in light of the European Commission declaring 2021 to be “The European Year of Rail” – examines how to increase rail usage throughout Europe, calling for increased investment to develop Europe’s rail network and a modal shift towards rail as one of the most sustainable, energy-efficient and safest forms of transport.



2. Cross-border public services in Europe 142nd plenary session, 4-5 February 2021 - Pavel Branda



The opinion addresses the many obstacles to providing cross-border public services, highlighting the need for three essential conditions for successful delivery: a legal framework, structures and financing. It underlines the need for an EU legal framework and for the Member States and regions with legal powers to establish cross-border contact points to work on systematically removing border obstacles.

3. The future of regional airports – Challenges and opportunities 145th plenary session, 30 June-2 July 2021 - Władysław Ortyl

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, nearly 200 airports in Europe were facing insolvency. Highlighting the vital role of regional airports and connectivity for regions’ development, the opinion calls for the European Commission to develop more flexible and effective public aid rules to provide regional airports with financial assistance, and urges the allocation of EU funds to the development of safety, security, innovation and digitalisation of airports.



4. Effectively engaging LRAs in the preparation of the Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes for the 2021-2027 period 146th plenary session, 12-14 October 2021 - **Juraj Droba**



The opinion seeks to improve regional participation in the 2021-27 cohesion policy programmes, emphasising that the principles of partnership and multilevel governance contribute to better identification of needs, a stronger commitment to objectives and a sense of ownership. It calls for the European Commission to closely monitor the application of the partnership principle and to provide recommendations to Member States and relevant authorities on its better implementation.

5. A Drone Strategy 2.0 157th plenary session, 9-10 October 2023 - **Władysław Ortyl**

The increasing use of drones – one of the fastest-growing markets globally – poses significant challenges and opportunities for local and regional authorities. The opinion calls for coordinated regulatory measures at all levels of European governance, giving regional and local authorities basic autonomy to organise the new drone services in their territories.



6. A Just Transition for all EU regions 162nd plenary session, 8-9 October 2024 - **Marco Marsilio**



The EU's ambitious transition to a climate-neutral economy has increasingly profound implications for Europe's regions, workers, industries and society at large. To avoid compromising the EU's competitiveness, the opinion calls for a transition based on technology neutrality, and for expanding the 2021-2027 Just Transition Fund to include sectors like the automotive and supplier industries.

7. Solving obstacles to the cooperation of emergency services in the EU's border regions

163rd plenary session, 20-21 November 2024 - **Pavel Branda**

Solving obstacles to cross-border cooperation among emergency services is particularly important, as these obstacles can put lives at risk. The opinion identifies the various categories of obstacles and proposes actions to tackle them at all levels of governance, from EU legislation bridging legislative disparities in border regions to the establishment of permanent cross-border structures.



ECON

1. Implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility 147th plenary session, 30 November-1 December 2021 - **Rob Jonkman**



In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU adopted its massive €672.5 billion RRF instrument to help mitigate the impacts of the pandemic. While welcoming the RRF, the opinion calls for improving the insufficient involvement of local and regional authorities in the preparation and implementation of national recovery and resilience plans, thereby enabling a more place-based approach and better synergies with cohesion policy.

2. Interoperable Europe Act 155th plenary session, 23-24 May 2023 - **Michele Pais**

The opinion responds to the European Commission's Interoperable Europe Act proposal, stressing that local and regional authorities – who are at the forefront of providing services to citizens – must be consulted on the pace and degree of implementing interoperability solutions, taking into account their diverse administrative capacities and providing them with adequate financial resources.



3. Shock-proofing European regions: Strengthening local and regional economic resilience in the strategic evolution of the Single Market 162nd plenary session, 8-9 October 2024 - Ilpo Heltimoinen



Recent crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, have highlighted the importance of strengthening regional economic resilience. The opinion stresses the need to diversify and secure regional supply chains, highlights the crucial role of SMEs and strong external border regions, as well as the importance of nuclear energy for meeting the EU's energy independence and decarbonisation objectives.

4. Supporting SMEs in regional value chains – fostering the proximity economy

164th plenary session, February 2025 - **Oszkár Seszták**

SMEs in a proximity economy – an ecosystem based on short value chains within a close geographical area – tend to have a long-term orientation as part of a local community, thereby fostering territorial resilience and cohesion. The opinion stresses the added value and the specific needs of these entities, including skilled workforce, SME networks, cross-border cooperation structures and quality infrastructure.



ENVE

1. New Circular Economy Action Plan 140th plenary session, 12-14 October 2020 - Tjisse Stelstra



The opinion stresses the urgent need to accelerate the transition towards a regenerative growth model, keeping resource consumption within planetary boundaries and reducing our footprint. For this it is imperative to decouple growth from resource use, to develop towards a true circular society and to cooperate at all levels of governance and society. Additionally, the opinion calls on the European Commission and the Member States to reduce dependency on third parties and virgin resources, strengthen security of supply by firmer organising – especially scarce and critical – resource management and develop an EU Resource Policy Platform.

2. Energy package on gas, hydrogen and methane emissions 151st plenary session 12-14 October 2022 - **Jakub Chelstowski**

The opinion stresses the need to protect consumers from high prices and to guarantee security of energy supply for them, particularly given the current geopolitical context. The opinion calls for an assessment of the long-term potential of biogas and biomethane production at regional level, on the basis of which it will be possible to identify the regional development potential of the decarbonised gas ecosystem. Finally, it recommends the establishment of a common methodology for monitoring methane emissions, which will allow the launch of coordinated efforts to reduce methane emissions in the EU.



3. Localising energy production: the role of geothermal energy 160th CoR plenary session, 17-18 April 2024 - **József Ribányi**



The aim of this opinion is to highlight and raise awareness of the untapped potential of geothermal energy - an energy source that can be used and exploited all across the EU's territory by using locally tailored technology. The opinion considers that a locally produced, renewable energy like geothermal could play a considerable role in making LRAs more resilient while making the EU more energy independent, energy secure and contributing to decarbonisation goals. Geothermal energy has direct benefits for local communities and economies that would benefit from an EU-wide strategy.

4. Preventing plastic pellet losses to reduce microplastic pollution 160th CoR plenary session, 17-18 April 2024 - **Roberto Ciambetti**

The opinion welcomes the proposal of the European Commission on preventing plastic pellet losses to reduce microplastic pollution. The opinion recommends that the Regulation's rules be clear, certain and simple, so that they do not lend themselves to different interpretations by individual Member States, in particular as regards who they apply to, the definitions and the requirements, as this would undermine the effectiveness of the Regulation.



1. European Health Union: Reinforcing the EU’s resilience 144th plenary session, 5-7 May 2021 - **Roberto Ciambetti**



The objective of this opinion is to review the partially obsolete framework dating back to 2013 and to suggest changes to the current EU health security architecture. The opinion notes that, although health policy remains a primary competence of Member States, a reflection is needed on how to improve coordination and strengthen the EU’s response to cross-border health threats. It recommends that the proposed foresight activities and enhanced reporting requirements on healthcare data and performance include a regional dimension as well as the national one. Finally, the opinion calls for the EU to minimise its dependence on third countries with regard to the production of medicines and medical supplies.

2. Resilience of critical entities 145th plenary session, 30 June-1 July 2021 - **Mario Guarente**

The opinion welcomes the substantial extension of the scope of the proposed directive as well as the shift from protecting the infrastructure to strengthening the resilience of the entities operating it but stresses, however, that the protection of infrastructure itself should not be disregarded. It urges the European Commission to consider further increasing the number of sectors to be covered by the directive to also include the distribution chains of essential items, and in particular the food production, processing and distribution sector.



3. Short-term accommodation rental services: balancing the needs of local communities, entrepreneurs and travellers 154th plenary session, 15-16 March 2023 - **Roberto Ciambetti**



Short-term rentals have become a major feature of the tourism sector and have an impact on local communities in a myriad of ways. Some of them positive – increased tourism flows, new business opportunities, additional revenue sources; other less so – noise, pollution, antisocial behaviour, lower availability of long-term rentals. This opinion calls for a balance between the needs of the Single Market and of local and regional authorities.

The opinion emphasises that the future Regulation should guarantee that local and regional authorities have access to quality and usable data that can help them inform policy-making, support planning and enable inspection.

4. The role of cities as health promoters 158th CoR Plenary session, 29-30 November 2023 - **Adam Banaszak**

The opinion urges all elected representatives to include health considerations in their policy-making processes and to prioritise health promotion and healthy living when deciding on urban planning and the built environment, parks and recreation facilities, mobility and transport, early childhood and education, long-term care and many other sectors. The opinion also emphasises that the Member States should further strengthen health promotion and disease prevention and to clearly communicate the social and economic advantages of preventive health care.



SEDEC

1. Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 144th CoR Plenary session 6-7 May 2021 - **Daniela Ballico**



The opinion emphasises the need to uphold the rights of persons with disabilities as also outlined in EU treaties and the UN Convention. It supports the 2021-2030 EU Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, advocating for the involvement of local and regional governments in implementing and monitoring the strategy. The opinion calls for increased resources, better accessibility, and the promotion of independent living and participation in the community. It also highlights the importance of inclusive education, employment opportunities, and combating discrimination against citizens with disabilities in all aspects of life.

2. Strategy on Combating Antisemitism and Fostering Jewish Life (2021-2030)

150th CoR Plenary session 28-29 June 2022 - **Ádám Karácsony**

The opinion supports the EU strategy on combating antisemitism and stresses the importance of involving local and regional authorities in its execution. It expresses concern about the increasing antisemitism reported by Jewish communities. The opinion endorses the strategy's comprehensive approach, including consulting the relevant stakeholders, the protection of Jewish cultural heritage, and combating antisemitism through education and funding. It highlights the need for clear definitions of antisemitism and effective prosecution of hate crimes, along with enhanced support for Jewish communities. Additionally, it calls for greater regional involvement, improved data collection, and stronger international cooperation.



3. Towards an integrated EU policy approach to support place-based innovation for the green and digital transition

159th CoR Plenary session 30-31 January 2024 - **Andrea Putzu**



The opinion emphasises the critical role of regions in driving innovation across Europe. It calls for better recognition of regions, sustained financial support, and improved synergies between EU funds and programmes. The opinion also highlights the importance of place-based innovation for Europe's competitiveness, advocating for regions to be central to the EU's industrial policy and innovation agenda. The opinion supports extending key innovation initiatives, like Regional Innovation Valleys, to further enhance regional potential and impact.

4. Demographic change in Europe: a toolbox for action

162nd plenary session, 8-9 October 2024 - **Ádám Karácsony**

The opinion discusses the challenges posed by declining birth rates and aging populations in Member States, arguing that the demographic transition is the third major transition next to green and digital. It raises concerns over the economic impact of a shrinking workforce and the sustainability of social welfare systems, and proposes potential solutions, including incentivising higher birth rates in European Member States. Overall, the opinion advocates for proactive policies to address demographic shifts and mitigate their long-term implications.

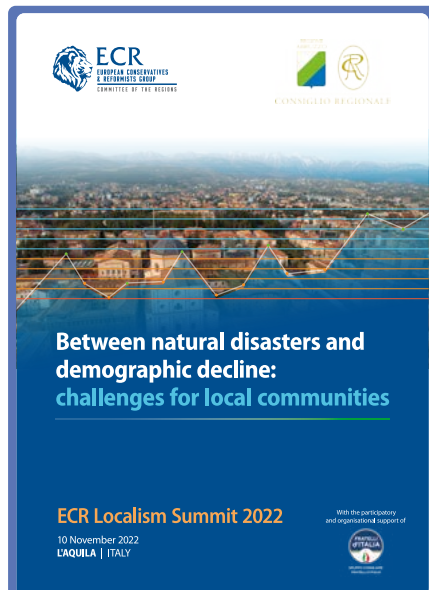


Events organised by ECR Group during CoR mandate 2020-2025

Two major events, the **ECR Summit** and the **ECR Study Days**, are organised annually by the ECR Group within the European Committee of the Regions.

ECR Localism Summit

The third ECR Localism Summit 2021 was held on 5 November 2021 in the province of Drenthe, The Netherlands hosted by **Tjisse Stelpstra**, focusing on sustainable and innovative energy solutions, including hydrogen for the successful energy transition of our cities and regions.



The fourth ECR annual Localism Summit was organised in L'Aquila, Abruzzo region in Italy on 10 November 2022 hosted by **Marco Marsilio**. On this occasion, conservative and reformist leaders reaffirmed their commitment to strengthen bilateral relations through the **L'Aquila Declaration**. This declaration emphasises the importance of exchange of administrative measures, the development of bilateral agreements on shared interests, and mutual assistance in crises such as natural disasters and health emergencies.

SUMMIT

The ECR Group in the CoR held its fifth annual Localism Summit in Lappeenranta, Finland on 12 May 2023 hosted by **Ilpo Heltimoinen**. Renowned politicians, academics, and industry representatives discussed sustainable solutions for a just energy transition.



ECR Localism Summit 2023

Sustainable growth through a just energy transition



#LocalismSummit
12 May 2023 | Lappeenranta | Finland

SUMMIT

SUMMIT OF CONSERVATIVE LOCAL & REGIONAL LEADERS

18 October 2024
Rome, Italy



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The ECR Group organised the **Summit of Conservative local and regional Leaders** in Rome, Italy on 18 October 2024 hosted by **Roberta Angelilli**. The Summit focused on the role of conservative regions in promoting European cultural identity and preserving natural heritage.

ECR Study Days

Study Days

ECR GROUP
COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

19 February 2021
Podkarpacie, Poland

#ECRSTUDYDAYS

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The second ECR CoR Study Days was held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The event was hosted by **Władysław Ortyl**, and took place on 19 February 2021. The conference focused on two key topics: smart specialisation and new trends in the EU budget for 2021-2027.

The fourth edition of the ECR Group Study Days at the CoR took place in Kraków, Poland on 8 April 2022 hosted by **Witold Kozłowski**. The event focused on the role of local and regional governments in financing and organising sports events.

Study Days 2022

Organisation
of sports events
by local and regional
governments

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COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

08-04-2022
Kraków, Poland

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MAŁOPOLSKA

STUD

The 2023 ECR CoR Group Study Days, hosted in Budapest, Hungary by **Anna Magyar**, focused on addressing demographic decline through family-friendly policies and fostering historic, regional, and cultural traditions to reinforce a values-based European Union.



European Committee of the Regions

Study Days 2023

Defending common sense and strengthening cooperation in the EU's multi-level governance

10.11.2023 | Budapest, Hungary



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DAYS

Study Days 2024

DEFENDING EUROPEAN FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

ECR GROIP

03-05-2024

Valladolid, Spain



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The 2024 ECR CoR Group Study Days was held in Valladolid, Spain on 3 May 2024 hosted by **Juan García Gallardo Frings**. The conference focused on two critical topics: ensuring a just and impartial application of the Rule of Law and preparing European agriculture for future challenges.

ECR Seminars

During its current mandate, the ECR Group has also organised several thematic events that address pressing issues in Europe, bringing together experts, local decision-makers, and policymakers to exchange insights and strategies.

- 1 Workshop Post-Brexit Europe: A Local Government Perspective” held on 11 June 2021.
- 2 The ECR Group also played an active role in the European Economic Forum, organised by the Łódzkie region in Poland, partnering for two consecutive years, 2022 and 2023. In 2022 - “Business in the Era of Innovation”. In 2023 - “The European Year of Skills”
- 3 In 2024, the ECR Group organised the Seminar “Conservative Local Leaders United in the Fight Against Drug Trafficking and Criminality”



Communication campaign on the fight against drugs and drug trafficking

In the run-up to the EU elections that took place in June 2024, the ECR Group decided to work on a topic that is very close to the Conservative cause – the fight against drugs and drug trafficking. Drugs continue to be a complex health, social and security concern in the European Union with local and regional authorities hugely impacted as drug trafficking affects the stability and prosperity of entire regions and local communities. Our member and rapporteur on the topic, Matteo Bianchi, presented to members the idea to launch a communication campaign on the fight against drugs and drug trafficking.

10 MEASURES TO UNITE AGAINST DRUGS

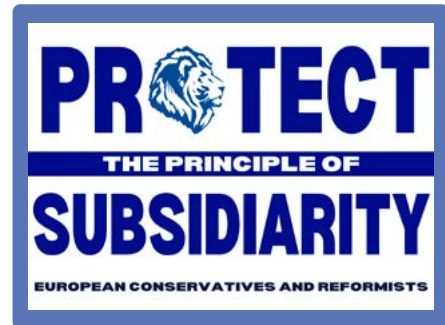
Conservative local and regional leaders commit to unite in the fight against drugs and

- 1 **to fight drug trafficking** and organised crime,
- 2 to reduce drug-related violence on the streets,
- 3 **to support citizens in the fight against drugs** through the establishment of neighbourhood watch campaigns,
- 4 to make prevention a priority through the promotion of information and awareness-raising campaigns in schools,
- 5 **to offer sport, leisure and culture opportunities** to specific groups in the community, in particular vulnerable minors, to minimise the risk of getting involved in criminal or drug activity,
- 6 to strengthen the resilience of logistics hubs, which are the main entry points for illicit substances,
- 7 **to establish local platforms** for regular sharing of information and best practices in the fight against drug addiction,
- 8 to safeguard clean and safe liveable physical environments for communities including appropriate street lighting, which can influence drug use behaviours,
- 9 **to provide support for families** with members or parents on drugs and to provide access to care and treatment services,
- 10 to promote public-private partnerships dedicated to analysing new trafficking developments via digital and online sales.



Recommendations from Conservative Local and Regional Leaders for the 2024 European Elections

Within the context of the 2024 European elections, the ECR Group established a set of recommendations, which represent the most pressing issues for our citizens, our businesses, and our economy. If given priority in the next mandate, our recommendations would help to pivot the EU in the right direction of common sense and pragmatism.





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