

# Outermost regions are a land of opportunities for the European Union

Unanimous support to the outermost regions in their call to keep a strong cohesion policy after 2020 at COTER's seminar in Tenerife

The Commission for Territorial Cohesion Policy and EU Budget (COTER) of the European Committee of the Regions met in Tenerife to discuss the challenges and opportunities for the economic, social and territorial development of the EU's outermost regions. The message is clear: the potential of the outermost regions is still untapped and more investments are needed to convert overseas territories into innovation hubs that foster growth and jobs while they reinforce EU's strategic position globally. The COTER seminar has been hosted by the president of the Canary Islands Fernando Clavijo (ES/ALDE) as a follow up to the adoption of the CoR opinion [Towards full implementation of the renewed European Strategy for the Outermost Regions](#) last January for which he was the rapporteur.

'The outermost regions are a land of opportunities for the European Union', said **president Fernando Clavijo** in his opening speech in Tenerife. 'It is essential that we keep a strong cohesion policy after 2020 to overcome the remoteness and territorial isolation of our communities and to give our citizens the same opportunities in education, employment and prosperity as other European citizens', added president Clavijo. In relation to the EU's renewed strategy, president Clavijo, who currently holds the Presidency of the Conference of Presidents of the Outermost Regions, reiterated his commitment to 'follow its implementation closely to ensure it matches the needs and expectations of the outermost regions'.

**Petr Osvald (CZ/PES), president of the COTER commission and Member of the Plzeň City Council** declared: 'Cohesion policy has been and should remain the most powerful tool of the European Union to invest in our regions and bring prosperity for all citizens. We need a strong cohesion policy in the next EU budget, in order to provide outermost regions with the necessary means to bridge the inequality gap and maximise their growth potential. In this respect, I am proud that more than 4000 elected representatives, institutions and associations have already given their support to the Cohesion Alliance'.

**Rodolphe Alexandre, president of the French territory of Guiana** stressed: 'Cohesion policy is a vital tool for the development of Guiana and for the rest of the EU's outermost regions. It is the main investment tool in the outermost regions and has greatly contributed to create growth and jobs in our territories. Maintaining and reinforcing cohesion policy after 2020 is our absolute priority'.

Spanish Deputy Prime Minister **Soraya Sáenz de Santamaría** addressed the COTER members in the closing session underlining that 'The Spanish government is committed to defend a strong cohesion policy as a key element in the future

of the European Union’.

Representatives discussed the best ways to put the EU’s renewed strategy for the outermost regions into practice. The COTER seminar included a first session focusing on the implementation modalities to boost sustainable development and social inclusion and reduce territorial disparities with EU mainland territories. The importance of connectivity and transport infrastructures as a tool for territorial cohesion was the focus of the second session. The potential for the outermost regions to become test stations for innovative projects was the main topic of the third session.

The EU’s outermost regions are governed by the article 349 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union which foresees specific measures to be undertaken in favour of the outermost regions due to remoteness, insularity, difficult topography and climate or economic dependence which severely restrain their development.

#### **Additional information:**

Last 31 January 2018, the European Committee of the Regions unanimously adopted the CoR opinion, rapporteur **Fernando Clavijo (ES/ALDE)**, president of the Canary Islands, entitled ” [Towards full implementation of the renewed European Strategy for the Outermost Regions](#) .”

The outermost regions comprise six French overseas communities (French Guyana, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Mayotte, Réunion and Saint Martin), two autonomous Portuguese regions (the Azores and Madeira) and the Spanish autonomous region of the Canary Islands.

[Outermost Regions Facts and figures, 24 October 2017, European Commission](#) .

Between November 2017 and the end of 2018, [the Canary Islands is holding the chair of the Conference of Presidents of the Outermost Regions](#) (CPOR).

Communication from the Commission, 17 October 2017: [A stronger and renewed strategic partnership with the EU’s outermost regions](#) .

European Commission, 24 October 2017: [The Outermost Regions: European lands In the world – A privileged, renewed and strengthened partnership](#) .

European Parliament, 19 January 2018: [Outermost regions of the EU: A stronger and renewed partnership](#) .

#### **The Cohesion Alliance**

The Alliance was born on October 9, 2017 to support the continuity of the cohesion policy, which has more than 630,000 million euros for the period 2014-2020. This policy could be one of the items of the budget that is most affected by the hole left by the departure of the United Kingdom from the Union in March 2019 in the community accounts. Cohesion policy is an EU investment instrument to smooth imbalances between the different regions of the continent.

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