

Video Tele-Conference of two JCC Montenegro Co-Chairs



□□□□**Roberto Ciambetti** (IT/ECR), President of the Regional Council of Veneto, and **Aleksandar Kaščelan**, Mayor of the Old Royal Capital City of Cetinje, Montenegro, **the Co-Chairs of the Joint Consultative Committee of the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) and Montenegro (JCC Montenegro)**, held a video meeting on Friday, 8 May 2020. The talks demonstrated how CoR members are constantly engaged in cooperation with local and regional authorities in the EU candidate countries, such as Montenegro.

The Co-Chairs exchanged information on coronavirus pandemic. Mr Ciambetti's Veneto region was among the first and hardest hit in Europe. In Montenegro, on the other hand, the number of cases was low, and in Cetinje there were none. However, both Veneto, as the whole of Italy, and Cetinje and the whole of Montenegro, suffered heavy economic losses due to the halt of practically all economic activities during the period of confinement. National, regional, and local authorities are helping the businesses, especially small and medium ones. Both politicians agreed though that more help should come from the EU.

In particular, the Co-Chairs will further exchange information to find common solutions to mitigate the economic impact of the crisis. The tourism sector has been severely affected by the economic crisis and both EU regions and regions in Montenegro will act together to be able to revive it as soon as possible on the two sides of the Adriatic Sea.

The discussion has also included the draft five-year JCC Montenegro Work programme and the future cooperation in general. The Co-Chairs decided to intensify their contacts before the next JCC Montenegro meeting, which will lead to concrete joint actions. Mr Ciambetti also invited his Montenegrin counterpart to visit him in the Veneto Regional Council when the circumstances allow, and Mr Kaščelan gladly accepted the invitation.

This was the first meeting between JCC Montenegro Co-Chairs in the new CoR mandate. Normally, one meeting of JCC Montenegro is held in the first half of the year in Brussels, organised by the European Committee of the Regions as part of its Enlargement Day – the main annual EU enlargement event in Brussels. The second yearly JCC Montenegro meeting takes place in Montenegro in autumn. Because of Covid-19 pandemic, there will be no large in-person conferences in Brussels during the first half of 2020. This makes the meeting between Mr Ciambetti and Mr Kaščelan even more important.