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The enlargement of the Committee of the Regions.
Evaluating the entrance of new member states in a
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The enlargement of the Committee of the Regions. Evaluating the entrance of new member states in a representative institution^{*}

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Abstract

All the institutions of the EU have recently faced the challenge of enlargement which impact was not limited to the change in the number of officials present or languages utilised. The transformation called into question the capacity of the common institutions to resist in terms of the institutional identity and to absorb new members integrating them properly in the institutional structures and procures. The Committee of the Regions is distinguished among the EU institutions for an enormous variety of interests represented therein that has been often mentioned as an obstacle for the smooth and effective work of the institution.

In this context, the process of enlargement that has increased substantially the CoR's membership and made the diversity of interests even more rich, inevitably triggers the expectation of a growing degree of conflict in the Committee's internal policy-making process. Our working hypothesis is that the enlargement has increased the level of internal conflict in the CoR and contributed to further split of interest and creation of new interest groups.

Introduction

The institutions of the EU have recently faced the challenge of the 2004 and 2007 enlargements which impact was not limited to the change in the number of officials or languages utilised. The transformation called into question the capacity of the common institutions to resist in terms of the institutional identity and to absorb new members integrating them properly in the institutional structures and procures (Falkner and Nentwich 2001). As Best *et al.* (2005: 6) have suggested, "Enlargement is a potential generator of perturbations to the equilibrium of the EU system. These perturbations impose on pre-existing rules and routines a certain degree of adaptational pressure, to which actors can respond by fostering change".

Such tasks have been particularly tough for the EU representative bodies since they are characterised by non homogeneous membership and varying political ambitions. From this point of view, the Committee of the Regions (CoR) is particularly distinguished among the EU institutions for the enormous diversity of interests represented therein. This divergence triggers, quite naturally, questions regarding the institutional capacity to reach and maintain the internal equilibrium that guarantees the CoR a smooth participation in EU policy-making.

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Up to now the internal dimension of the CoR's activities has not been among the priority issues of the scientific community. The attention of scholars has principally been attracted by such aspects like the CoR's symbolic role within the perspective of the institutionalisation of the sub-national dimension in the EU governance (Hooghe and Marks, 1995; Mascia, 1996; Loughlin, 1997, 2001; Bullman, 2001), its effectiveness in promotion of the sub-national authorities' interests in European political arena (Bindi, 1998; Badiello, 1998; Jeffery, 2001, 2003), and the role and influence of the Committee in the EU policy-making process (Farrows and McCarthy, 1997; McCarthy, 1997; Millan, 1997; Warleigh, 1997, 1999, 2001; Jeffery, 2002a, 2002b). As far as the internal dimension of the CoR is concerned, the efforts of scholars have rarely gone beyond the description of its composition and administrative structure. Our information about the internal policy process of the Committee, indeed, is limited to the knowledge of potential cleavages existing in the Committee (Christiansen, 1995) and their impact on the voting behaviour of the Committee's members (Hönnige and Kaiser, 2003). Therefore, the necessity to open the "black box" of this EU institution still persists. From this point of view, the 2004 and 2007 enlargements offer the opportunity to gather evidence of the consensual mechanisms that have governed the CoR for its first ten years and to look at how the inclusion of new members from 12 different member states has changed them.

The recent EU enlargements have brought the CoR's membership to 344 representatives of regional and local authorities and, thereby, have further increased its internal complexity. It can be useful to remember that, in several cases, the regions of the new member states are significantly poorer than the regions of the old member states, and in many cases the new member states lack a tradition of regional governments and decentralisation. Therefore, two possible scenarios for the CoR have been suggested: increasing difficulties for the Committee in terms of internal consensus of the policy-making process (Christiansen and Lintner, 2005), or either status-quo, from the point of view of partisan and authority-based balances and quasi-consociational decision-making procedures (Scherpereel, 2005).

This article provides some first empirical findings of the impact that the 2004 and 2007 EU enlargements have had on the internal policy process of the CoR from two points of views. On the one hand we will look at the change in the CoR's formal rules and procedures, on the other hand we will consider the new members' engagement in the activities of the CoR's working structures and their behaviour in the process of opinion formulation and adoption¹. Therefore, we start with the analysis of how the Committee's consultative and political bodies have transformed after May 2004. Then, looking at the two opposite expectations regarding the "after-enlargement" scenario of the Committee's internal policy-making (increased conflict versus status-quo), we proceed with an exploratory analysis of the Committee's consultative output to understand whether the degree of consensus in the Committee has been altered. On the ground of the empirical analysis of CoR members' voting behaviour we will provide some preliminary hypothesis about the emergence of a new cleavage dividing the East and the West regions within the CoR following the 2004 and 2007 enlargements.

¹ In particular, we will consider the impact of both the enlargements on the composition of institutional structures and membership. The data on the process of opinion formulation and adoption are far too limited for the period after the 2007 enlargement. For this reason, we will consider the data available until the end of the 3rd CoR's mandate (2002-2006).

The impact of enlargement on the CoR's institutional structure

A promising way to conceptualise the impact of enlargement on the CoR's institutional structure is to look at how successive enlargements have changed the areas of conflict (the so-called cleavages) that the literature had identified in the CoR. Diversity of interests is an integral part of the CoR's nature. The CoR was created to represent interests of a multitude of sub-national units of the EU countries in the European arena. In the past, six main areas of conflict within the CoR have been identified: local vs. regional levels of government, executive regionalism vs. deliberative regionalism, rural vs. urban regions, regions from the Northern member states vs. the Southern ones, left-wing vs. right-wing parties and national delegations (Christiansen, 1996: 97-104; Farrows and McCarthy, 1997: 28; Hönning and Kaiser, 2003: 4-8). However, according to Hönning and Kaiser (2003: 5), over time some of these areas of conflict have proved to be just temporary "ad-hoc clashes of interests" in relation with selected policy issues, and only the last two areas originated "major and persistent conflicts".

The *regional versus local line of conflict* arises from the fact that, contrary to the body's name, the CoR's composition provides representation not only for regional institutions but also for local authorities. Moreover, there is a significant quota of representatives of the intermediate authorities whose competencies vary enormously from country to country. According to Van der Knapp (1994: 92), "classifying regional and local levels is a complicated and deceptive venture", because national constitutions provide them with significantly different roles in the national policy and the characteristics of the sub-national institutions are significantly different between (or even within) the member states (Loughlin, 2001). The heterogeneity of sub-national authorities is so wide that even "the term of 'sub-national authorities' is an extremely general descriptor, an umbrella under which many diverse authorities fall" (Scherpereel, 2007: 26). For this reason, it can be hard to classify the CoR's members as regional, intermediate or local representatives. Instead, it can be easier to classify them as local representatives (coming from municipal authorities) or supra-local representatives (coming from highest sub-national authorities, intermediate sub-national authorities, language communities and overseas territories).

As tab.1 shows, before the 2004 enlargement about 65 per cent of the CoR's members represented supra-local authorities, while the new member states representatives come mainly from local institutions (68,9 per cent). This change of CoR's membership has reduced the share of supra-local representatives to 52,9 per cent.

Over the years, however, the presence of contradictory interests of different levels of sub-national authorities has not resulted into constant conflicting coalitions and, consequently, did not have permanent impact on the internal policy process in the Committee. Moreover, local government representatives from the member states not possessing a regional level (but an intermediate one) have been likely to share some regional interests, at least, in those cases where they actively campaign for the establishment of regional institutions².

²To this end Christiansen brings the example of local councillors from Wales and Scotland that would be counted as "local members", even though some of these delegates to CoR perceive their voice as one for their region/nation rather than for their respective local government (Christiansen, 1995: 40).

Tab.1. Representation of local and “supra-local” authorities in the CoR.

Period		Authority	
		Local	Supra-local
CoR before enlargement (2004)	N. of members	78	144
	% of members (out of 222)	35.1	64.9
Accession states (2004 and 2007)	N. of members	84	38
	% of members (out of 122)	68.9	31.1
CoR after enlargement (2004 and 2007)	N. of members	162	182
	% of members (out of 344)	47.1	52.9

Source: Scherpereel (2005); data updated by the authors to 2007.

Furthermore, number of institutional undertakings have taken place to accommodate this potentially conflictual line inside the Committee. First of all, during the very early phase of the CoR’s activity it was decided that rotating presidency would be kept, enabling a half-term for regional and a half-term for local representatives. So, for example, the first president of the CoR has been the centre-right president of the French region of Languedoc Roussillon, Jacques Blanc, followed by the centre-left mayor of the Spanish city of Barcelona Pasqual Maragall I Mira, although the succession between them was far from being smooth, with Blanc paying particular attention to his status after CoR’s presidency (European Voice, 1996). This latter fact is another evidence of the ability of the CoR to conciliate different political interests with *ad hoc* institutional solutions (tab. 2).

Tab.2. The presidents of the CoR since 1994.

Years	Name	Institution	Position (beyond CoR)	Political party
1994-1996	Jacques Blanc	President Languedoc-Roussillon (France)	ARE vice-president	EPP
1996-1998	Pasqual Maragall I Mira	Mayor of Barcelona (Spain)	President of CEMR	PSE
1998-2000	Manfred Dammayer	Baden-Württemberg, parliament president (Germany)	-	PSE
2000-2002	Jos Chabert	Vice-president Brussels capital region (Belgium)	-	EPP
2002-2004	Albert Bore	Mayor of Birmingham (United Kingdom)	President Eurocities	PSE
2004-2006	Peter Straub	Baden-Württemberg, parliament president (Germany)	AER, vice-president and president of the Committee for Constitutional Affairs; CALRE member	EPP
2006-	Michele Delabarre	Mayor of Dunkerque (France)	-	PSE

The second line of conflict is that between the *executive (or administrative) regionalism and deliberative (or political) regionalism*, where the former describes the

growing array of unelected government bodies that operate at the regional level, and the latter refers to regional directly elected institutions with (more or less developed) legislative powers³.

The regions of new member states fall exclusively in the first category since they have mainly been created in order to benefit of the EU's structural funds and, more in general, the development policies, as well as with the EU's practice and regulatory norms. In the 1990s, the European conditionality pressures have generated, in Central and Eastern European Countries, two main contradictory trends which have weakened regional political autonomy (Hughes et al. 2004): on the one hand, the creation of the regions has been the result of the impetus toward decentralisation in the states which had experienced a fragmentation of the state authority; on the other side, a re-concentration of power to the central governments has been imposed by the national elites, quite often justified on the basis of the pressures by the European Commission (Marek and Baun, 2002). Whatever, it is a matter of fact that a German Land or an Italian *Regione* are more powerful than a Polish *voivodship* (where a *voivos*, that is to say a representative of the national government, supervises the regional government administration and the implementation of the national policies) or one of the seven Hungarian administrative regions only in charged of regional development policies and structural funds. For their weak administrative powers and their weak institutional identity, the regions of the new member states are not likely to change significantly the mechanisms of interests accommodation developed inside the CoR in order to cope with the conflicts between regions with different powers.

At the same time, the ambitions of political regions within the perspective of EU politics go definitely beyond the limited consultative role of the CoR. This is fairly understandable taking into account their substantial competencies and autonomy in the domestic systems. No surprise, therefore, that these regions have sought for alternative channels to promote their interests outside the CoR as, for example, through the direct lobbying of the EU institutions by single regions (mainly using their regional representatives offices) or through regional associations (Keating and Hooghe, 2001). This "extra CoR" activity has prevented, in a way, the emergence of a clearly structured cleavage inside the CoR.

There are several reasons why the sub-national authorities of the new member states show some difficulties also in participating in the initiatives of regional associations. In the case, for example, the emergence of the Conference of European regions with legislative power (REGLEG) has been quite irrelevant for the regions from the new member states, since they lack any legislative power on national level (Scherpereel, 2007).

The third line of conflict corresponds to the traditional division between *Southern European regions and Northern European regions* in the EU. Christiansen (1996) considers the North and South categories more empirical than analytical ones. With some exceptions, "one can distinguish regional and local government activity between North and South through constitutional factors, such as tax-raising powers, size of budgets, extent of competencies, and legislative powers, as well as from the general

³ Here we prefer definitions somehow different for the definitions established by Christiansen (1996, 102). For this author in the administrative regionalism "the emphasis of regional activity lies in the execution and administration of public policies, sometimes legislated for at higher levels", and in the deliberative regionalism "the regional institutions are mainly a place for debate and deliberation with only very limited policy-making powers".

disparity in economic and geography structure, distance to EU core markets, and so on” (Christiansen, 1996: 104). In particular, the Southern regions (like the French ones) would be characterised by a “Napoleonic” or prefect tradition, associated with a highly centralized state structure at regional and local levels with central government’s representatives such as the prefects and the deconcentrated offices, whereas the Northern regions would be characterised by the Anglo-Saxon tradition, featuring a more pluralistic state-society relations and the local institutions’ involvement on the implementation of central policies (Loughlin, 2001).

However, since 1994 such dividing line has had no effect in the structure of the CoR, even if Christiansen (1996) has considered the creation of a “Southern Group” among the delegates at the beginning of the CoR history as an indicator of a rising cleavage. A North vs. South divide has been visible in the CoR, only with respect to specific policy issues such as, for example, the distribution of Structural funds, with the Southern regions more active than the Northern ones in participating in the discussion of the regulations of Cohesion policy reforms. In any case, as it will be argued in the fourth section of the article, even in this policy field the North-South conflict has been very limited and after 2004 it has probably been replaced by East-West competition, as a consequence of resources redistribution by the Structural Funds regulations 2007-2013 (Brunazzo and Piattoni, 2007).

The conflict over the distribution of Structural Funds has been visible also in the fourth dividing line, the one between *urban and rural territories*. Divisions in the CoR often refer to this dimension, with the territories paying attention to “their” specific regional policy’s objective. As we will see later, this is certainly true, but it can be useful to remember that urban and industrial authorities have created interest structures beyond the CoR to promote their specific interests in EU politics like legislative regions do. Among these structures are Eurocities and European Industrial Regions Association (EIRA – formerly RETI). Their lobbying activity was rather successful in defending the funding for Objectives 2 regions and URBAN initiatives. Recently, cooperation intentions between regional and cities associations, on the one hand, and the CoR, on the other, have been expressed more often than in the past. This has happened partly due to some influential leaders, i.e ex-president of Eurocities Albert Bore (who held simultaneously CoR’s presidential mandate during 2002-2004). Eurocities is one of the associations that tend to cooperate closely with and within the CoR. At the same time, this changing trend in the relations between formal and informal sub-national channels can be the effect of the strengthening of the role of national governments on the processes of cohesion policy reform (Sutcliffe, 2000).

Finally, the 2004 enlargement has brought mainly rural areas representatives to the CoR. This is important, since on the eve of the 2004 enlargement, the European Commission clearly explained to what extent the entrance of the new member states affect the rural economy of the EU: “Enlargement will lead to a marked widening of disparities in agriculture and an increase in its dual nature because of the large number of small holdings in the accession countries with larger employment than in the EU15. The number of employed in agriculture in the EU will increase from around 6½ million to 10½ million, raising the share of total employment from 4% to 5½% which would become 7½ if Bulgaria and Romania were also to join” (European Commission 2004, 127).

Previous studies on the CoR have defined the above conflicting interests as cleavages (Christiansen, 1995, 1996; Piattoni, 2002), even if they do not fall fully in this category.

These groups of conflicting interest have not evolved into permanent structures within the Committee but only form *ad hoc* coalitions on specific issues. The 2004 and 2007 enlargements are not likely to change this picture a lot, even if the constitutional, economic and social characteristics of the new member states' regions are quite different from those of the old member states.

Instead, there are two remaining groups of conflicting interests, national delegations and political groups, that correspond to our definition of cleavages (as persistent over time and across a wide range of policy issues) and that are of particular importance in the CoR's internal policy process. A peculiarity of the CoR is that a certain conflict tends to take place not only within the cleavages but also between them. In other words, in many aspects the Committee's internal policy making process is characterised by competition for influence between national delegations and political groups.

National delegations have been basic units of the CoR from its very establishment, while political groups have been gradually established within the Committee. Furthermore, the conflict generated is, in contrast to the coalitions above, persistent over time and across a wide range of policy fields, maybe because they are institutionally rooted: national delegations (as well as the political groups) have their own administrations, agreed rules of action and interests going beyond single policy issues.

National delegations have been the basis of the CoR structure from its very establishment, and they are still considered to be very important (tab. 3). For this reason, "CoR is less a Committee of the regions than a 'committee of member state representatives'" (Christiansen, 1996: 104-105). The process of nominating national delegations for the CoR is decided by central governments according to national constitutions and practises. So, for example in Belgium there is a legal basis for such a procedure in the form of the Constitutional provision and the Ordinary law, while in Denmark such a legal basis does not exist. Moreover, there are different systems of the internal balanced representation. In the Danish delegation not only geographical and political balance but also male and female proportionality is taken into account (Committee of the Regions, 2004). After the approval of the Treaty of Nice (entered into force in 2003), the condition of an elected mandate has become mandatory for CoR's membership: "all (CoR's) members hold a regional or local authority mandate or are politically accountable to an elected assembly" (art. 263). The candidatures are normally proposed by associations of regional and local authorities in all the countries and, as practice shows, they are generally accepted by the national governments. The nomination procedure of the new delegations has followed the formal established rules, with each delegation choosing an appropriate system of the internal balance. For example, the 12 Hungarian representatives are nominated by the national government in agreement with the 7 associations of local governments and the Regional Development Council and they are directly elected representatives or mayors of their municipality or county. At the same time, the Latvian delegation is proposed by each type of self-governments and approved by the Union of Local and Regional Governments of Latvia (ULRGL). Latvian representatives are selected taking into account the geographical and territorial representation as well as equal representation of men and women.

Tab. 3. National delegations in the CoR.

Member states	Seats
France, Germany, Italy, United Kingdom	24

Poland, Spain	21
Romania	15
Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden	12
Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Lithuania, Slovakia	9
Estonia, Latvia, Slovenia	7
Cyprus, Luxembourg	6
Malta	5

Each national delegation has its own rules of procedure: some combine strong working structures to assist the work of the national delegates with wider lobby activities in Brussels (the UK and Spain, for example), others rely mostly on the administrations in home countries (Nordic countries), or choose a quite passive approach (Portugal and France). The membership of the delegations is rotating, while the administration has more continuity. It is plausible that these differences will appear also between the national delegations from the new member states. Besides, CoR's history before the recent enlargements has shown that, may be surprisingly, major autonomy in domestic political systems has nothing to do with a more active role of the national delegation. Sometimes delegations of centralised member states are much better organised than those of regions with a substantial degree of autonomy. Moreover, each delegation has its own style of work. Sometimes leaders seek to promote their own regional goals at the expense of national general interest (as, for example, Spanish and German leaders). National delegations have their coordinators and usually hold regular meetings before the plenary sessions. They can also assist their members in the elaboration of reports and opinions. It is too early to judge on the quality of work of the new national delegations in the Committee and on the policy-making styles of the new members but the institutional roots (tradition of centralised government) and the political resources (quite poor) of the new national delegations, as well as the fact that a part of the interests represented in the CoR are nationally based, will justify the continuing importance of national delegations even after the 2004 and 2007 enlargements.

Political groups were not envisaged in the CoR's structure by the Maastricht Treaty, since the goal of its creation was a wider representation of sub-national authorities and not of political interests. They were formed only by the third plenary session, but the left-right balance had already been taken into account in the division of the first presidency period between Jacques Blanc and Pasqual Maragall. This principle, together with regional-local balance, has been carefully respected ever since. At the moment there are four political groups linked to the political parties of the European Parliament: the European Peoples Party (EPP), the Party of the European Socialist (PES), the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) and the Union for Europe of the Nations-European Alliance (UEN-EA). They have their own structures and an established set of political priorities. Each group has a president, a coordinator and several administrators. The four presidents are included in the Bureau of the CoR, which establishes the political programme for the presidential two-years term of office, prepares and organises the plenary sessions, and is responsible for financial questions. For this reasons, political groups are important in the definition of the CoR's political priorities, in promoting resolutions and in organising debates during the plenary sessions. Furthermore, political groups are definitely important in the elections of the CoR's president, and of the presidents of the working commissions. Within the commissions, political groups decide the allocations of opinions and organise their

discussion. Hönnige and Kaiser (2003) suggest that competition between political groups and national delegations is a zero sum game. In fact, they compete for influence and are often more important than the national delegations in the agenda setting phase. Table 4 presents some data on party groups membership after the 2004 enlargement. According to Scherpereel (2005: 21), enlargement has presented a challenge for the PES and a benefit for the ELDR. EPP percentage remained substantially stable. In any case, most of the political parties group will have to cope with problems of national political parties division. Even if parties have agreed to enter the same group, they are quite divided in the national arena and they have different vision of the EU. For example, even if the Civic Democratic Party (ODS) and the Christian and Democratic Union–Czechoslovak People’s Party (KDU-ČSL) are members of the same EPP group and of the Czech national government coalition, ODS is much more Euro-sceptic than KDU-ČSL.

Tab.4. Party group membership in the CoR.

Period		Party group				
		Party of European Socialism (PES)	European People’s Party (EPP)	European Liberal Democrat and Reform (ELDR/ALDE)	European Alliance (EA, UEN-EA)	Unaffiliated
CoR before enlargement (2004)	N. of members	90	87	27	9	9
	% of members (out of 222)	40.5	39.2	12.2	4.1	4.1
Accession states (2004 and 2007)	N. of members	35	45	27	2	13
	% of members (out of 122)	28.7	36.9	22.1	1.6	10.7
CoR after enlargement (2004 and 2007)	N. of members	125	132	54	11	22
	% of members (out of 344)	36.3	38.4	15.7	3.2	6.4

Source: Scherpereel (2005); data updated by the authors to 2007.

The integration of new members into the CoR’s activities

We have just observed how the enlargements have affected CoR in terms of membership and diversity of the represented interests. The question about the long-term consequences of the CoR’s extended membership remains open given the fact that enlargements (in particular the entrance of Bulgaria and Romania) have been quite a recent event, although it is already clear that the internal equilibrium of the Committee achieved over the years has been somehow altered. A more in-depth analysis is needed in order to assess the impact of enlargements on the functioning of this institution. Here we will consider two levels of analysis: the involvement of the new delegates in the institutional activities of the CoR and the voting behaviour of the members from the new member states.

The extent to which the new members will be involved in the activities of the CoR is an important variable to the understanding of the Committee's forthcoming adaptation. For the moment our knowledge of the degree of new members involvement in the CoR's activities is limited to the indicators of their presence at the plenary sessions and commissions meetings, their appointment to CoR's working and political structures, as well as their participation in the formulation of opinions.

It can be useful to remember that the CoR's commissions are responsible for drawing up draft versions of the opinions, reports and resolutions that are submitted to the Plenary Assembly for adoption. The CoR's has six committees covering several policy areas: the COTER Commission (Commission for territorial cohesion policy) is responsible for preparing the Committee's work in the area of regional policy, urban policy and transport; the DEVE Commission (Commission for sustainable development) is responsible for the work connected with the Common Agricultural Policy, the environment and energy; the ECOS Commission (Commission for economic and social policy) is responsible for social policy, employment and economic and monetary policy; the EDUC Commission (Commission for culture, education and research) is responsible for the work connected with education, youth and cultural diversity as well as the information society and research; the RELEX Commission (Commission for external relations) is responsible for the themes of enlargement of the European Union, the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, immigration and relations with non-EU countries; and, finally, the CONST Commission (Commission for constitutional affairs and European governance) is responsible for the work connected with European integration, subsidiarity, devolution and, more generally, the implementation of the Treaty on European Union.

As far as the management of the CoR's working structures is concerned, the quota of the new-comers in the CoR's commissions, including chairs and vice-chairs (three per commission) and political coordinators (four per commission), is quite modest: only 14 out of 60 people represent new member states. Furthermore, as Table 5 shows the new members have been introduced in the CoR's structures rather unevenly. Among them there are four vice-presidents of ECOS, DEVE, CONST and RELEX commissions (no presidential position has been assigned to a new member), six coordinators of the political groups acting in the commissions, four members of the commissions secretariats and no head of Unit⁴ (tab. 5).

Hence, the most extensive involvement of the new members in the work of CoR's thematic commissions has been provided by the political groups, engaging new members among the political coordinators present in each commission (Tab. 5).

⁴ A necessary premise is that the chairs, vice-chairs and coordinators of the political groups are CoR members, while the secretariat is composed by the civil servants.

Tab. 5: The quota of the new member-states representatives in the CoR's Commissions managing structures

Commissions/structures	COTER	ECOS	DEVE	EDUC	CONST	RELEX
Presidency						
<i>chair</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>vice-chair</i>	-	1	1	-	1	1
Political coordinators	1	2	2	-	1	-
Secretariat	1	-	-	1	1	1
Head of Unit	-	-	-	-	-	-

Notes: COTER: Commission for territorial cohesion policy; ECOS: Commission for economic and social policy; DEVE: Commission for sustainable development; EDUC: Commission for culture, education and research; CONST: Commission for constitutional affairs and European governance; RELEX: Commission for external relations.

Source: http://www.cor.europa.eu/en/presentation/cor_commission.htm accessed on January 2007.

As far as the political groups own structure is concerned, the new members are rather unevenly represented in both political (presidency and bureau) and technical (secretariat) structures. Each group appoints a presidency, comprising its president, vice-presidents and *bureau*. So, the new members account for three out of eight positions in the presidency (president and vice-presidents) of the most numerous EPP group, while in its bureau they are nine out of thirty two. In the PES's executive no new member state is represented, while out of its thirty five bureau members only five come from the new member states. In the smaller ALDE group no new member state is represented in the presidency, and there are three out of eight members in the group's Bureau. EA is the only group that has two new-comers in its bureau out of six, one of which is vice-president. Thus, the quota of the new members on the ruling positions of the political groups differs a lot and does not seem to be related to the right or left wing collocation of the group.

Tab. 6: Political groups Presidents and Bureau members. Source:

Group	EPP		PES		ALDE		EA	
	New members	Total	New members	Total	New members	Total	New members	Total
Presidency	3 (37.5%)	8 (100%)	0 (0%)	5 (100%)	0 (0%)	4 (100%)	1 (50 %)	2 (100%)
Bureau	9 (28.1)	32 (100%)	5 (14.3%)	35 (100%)	3 (37.5%)	8 (100%)	2 (33.3%)	6 (100%)

Notes: As regards the national distribution of the vice-president positions, all seats went to Eastern-European members: ECOS – Lithuania; DEVE – Poland; CONST – Slovakia; RELEX – Hungary. The Rules of Procedure provide for two vice-president posts per commission, while before 2004 it was only one.

Source: http://www.cor.europa.eu/en/presentation/political_groups.htm

As for the secretariat, which serves its respective group and facilitates the participation of its members in the work of the CoR as well as contact with the European Parliament, the share of public officials coming from the newly EU countries is comparatively small. The key positions in the secretariats of the political groups are still held by the “old” members.

Overall conflict versus consensus in the policy-making

The explorative analysis of the CoR's membership after 2004 and 2007 enlargements has brought up conflicting hypotheses about possible scenarios for the policy-making process in the Committee. In particular, Christiansen and Lintner (2005: 12) consider the impact of enlargement very relevant: this "may pitch the old against the new, and the economically richer regions against the weaker ones. In other words, the greater and the more diverse membership of the CoR is likely to make it yet more difficult for membership to reach agreement. Enlargement also means that the CoR itself has to adapt to a greater membership, with the associated logistical and political problems...". Furthermore, according to the scholars, "the fact that most countries in Central and Eastern Europe have rather centralised systems could also further strengthen the existing majority in the CoR, and might discourage the stronger regions from the Committee as an instrument for protecting their interests". This could be a danger for the traditional consensual decision-making in the CoR, that was frequent during the sessions before enlargements (Hönniger and Kaiser, 2003). By contrast, Scherpereel (2005: 27) writes that "the enlargement is unlikely to upset the CoR's developmental course or to bury in internal organizational chaos". Such positive proposition of Scherpereel is owing to the fact that since 1997 the CoR has made the enlargement one of the political priorities. As a result, the Committee has organised seminars and conferences in the accession countries, it has established a "CoR-Applicant State Liaison Group" and has admitted observers from the Central and East European Countries at its consultative and political proceedings. The aim of these activities was to speed up the socialisation of the new members into the CoR's work.

The analysis of the CoR's voting behaviour since 1994 seems to confirm Scherpereel's hypothesis: the overall consensus of the internal policy-making has not been upset by recent enlargements, since the unanimous vote prevailed in the process of adoption of opinions at the CoR's plenary sessions across all terms of office. Since 1994, about 65% of the opinions at the plenary sessions have been adopted by unanimity (Tab. 7).

Tab. 7. Opinions adopted at the plenary sessions in the indicated periods by majority and unanimous vote.

Mandate/vote	Majority	Unanimity	Missing	Total
1 st mandate	59	123	11	193
(1994-1998)	30.6%	63.7%	5.7%	100.0%
2 nd mandate	96	192	2	290
(1998-2002)	33.1%	66.2%	0.7	100.0%
3 rd mandate	88	163	1	252
(2002-2006)	34.9%	64.7%	0.4	100.0%
Total	243	478	14	735
	33.1%	65.0%	1.9	100%

Sources: "Towards Consolidation of the Committee of the Regions within the European Union" (CdR 188/96 fin); "Update of Opinions Adopted by the Committee of the Regions" 2nd four-year term of office (1998-2002)" (CdR 371/1998); "Update of Opinions Adopted by the Committee of the Regions , 3rd four-year term of office (2002-2006) CdR 112/2002fin), calculation by the author).

A methodological problem of the above analysis is the fact that unanimity in the Committee might be motivated by the belief that unanimously adopted opinions are more seriously taken into consideration by other EU institutions (Hönniger and Kaiser, 2003). However, if members of an enlarged CoR continue to vote unanimously triggered by the awareness of their stronger impact when acting consensually, it would

be an important evidence of substantial mediation capacity of the Committee and of quite a quick integration of the new members in the procedures and consensual political culture of the body.

A more in-depth analysis is, in any case, appropriate. First of all, it is necessary to clarify the difficulties of a deeper analysis. As it is well-known, CoR's opinions are voted on in two stages. The first step of voting is carried out at the level of the thematic commissions. At this stage the conflict of interests is more evident, since members are not conditioned by the desire to present unanimously adopted opinions, as it happens at plenary sessions. Unfortunately, the estimation of this vote outcome at this stage is problematic for two reasons: voting is conducted by hand raising. As one can imagine, this practice makes impossible to register where the cleavage line lies. Moreover, the results of the vote have been very rarely reported in the records of Commissions meetings. For this reason, we have necessarily focused our analysis on the vote-outcome at the plenary sessions. At this stage the CoR does not collect roll-call data, but it is possible, at least, to count accurately unanimity (consensus) and majority (conflict) outcomes.

The plausibility of the smooth integration of the new members in the CoR should be further tested by a policy-field analysis of the opinions adopted in the CoR during the entire 3rd mandate, in the periods between March 2002 and April 2004, and between May 2004 and November 2005 (Tab. 8). A necessary premise to this analysis is that its results may be partly conditioned by the rotation of the CoR's membership between the second and third terms of office, following the rule introduced by the Treaty of Nice of the suspension of CoR members' mandate in case of their failure to be re-elected in respective sub-national authorities.

So, before the enlargements the number of the opinions voted by unanimity was three times higher than that of the opinions adopted by majority and it was true for all policy areas. After May 2004, the number of unanimously adopted opinions surpass that of voted by majority only by six documents. There are four policy areas where the majority vote prevails: regional and local economic development in general; economic and social cohesion, regional cooperation and Structural funds; immigration policy and external relations; and, finally, general issues. Four more areas register the situation of a net equilibrium between consensus and conflict decision styles, with equal numbers of opinions adopted by majority and by unanimity: transport, energy and trans-European networks; rural development, agriculture and fisheries; public health; governance and institutional matters.

Only a long-time prospective will show whether the Committee's new membership is as willing to reach an overall agreement on policy decisions as the old one was. At the moment, the divergence of interests between "new" and "old" members appears to be particularly strong in the fields where, actually, it was expected to come up. It is above all regional and cohesion policy with the hot issue of the Structural Funds redistribution, and the issues of the external relations with non-EU countries, that comprise sensitive for new members issues of immigration and cultural links. The issues of transport and agricultural policy, as well as governance and public health matters appear to be more easy to reach a wide consensus on.

Tab. 8. Opinions adopted at the CoR's plenary sessions in the 3rd mandate.

Policy area	Period				Total
	2002-04/2004		05/2004-2005		
	Unanimity	Majority	Unanimity	Majority	
<i>Areas in which the majority voting prevails (2004-2006)</i>					
Regional and local economic development in general	2	2	2	3	9
Economic and social cohesion; regional cooperation; Structural funds	5	2	5	8	20
Immigration policy and external relations	13	8	8	10	39
General issues	17	6	9	10	42
<i>Areas in which there is a balance between majority and unanimity voting (2004-2006)</i>					
Transport, energy and Trans-European networks	10	2	3	3	18
Rural development; agriculture, fisheries	5	2	1	1	11
Public health	1	2	1	1	5
Governance and institutional matters	9	3	3	3	17
<i>Areas in which the unanimity voting prevails (2004-2006)</i>					
Environment	18	1	7	2	28
Social policy; employment	9	4	5	4	22
Education, youth, culture	12	4	6	2	24
Information society	7	3	5	2	17
Total	108	39	55	49	251

Note: the outcome of voting for the Contribution of the CoR to the European Convention (CdR127/2002) is not available; Source: CdR 112/2002.

Source: Update of Opinions Adopted by the Committee of the Regions, 3rd four-year term of office (2002-2006) (CdR 112/2002fin).

It has been suggested that the unanimous vote for the opinions at the plenary sessions would be conditioned by the desire of the CoR's members to have more input in the decision-making institutions (Hönnige and Kaiser, 2003). If it was true in the past, for the CoR's future such proposition seems to be rather a challenge. To this end, the role of the CoR's political leadership seems to be of particular importance. As Scherpereel (2005) has noticed, two of the most recent presidents of the Committee, the British Sir Albert Bore (PES) and the German Peter Straub (EPP), have both actively called upon the Committee to "speak with one voice"⁵ and we have found enough evidence that their appeals have been effective. At the same time, the entrance of the new members has open up spaces for a bigger competition on specific issue, triggering a new area of conflict (that one linked to redistributive policies) corresponding to the Est-West line of division. Only the future will show if this area of conflict will evolve into a new stable cleavage.

Conclusions

The 2004 and 2007 enlargements have had a relevant impact on the EU political system. Best *et al.* (2005) have proposed to study this impact on the EU institutions according to

⁵ See Bore's "Inauguration Speech as President of the Committee of the Regions – Wednesday 6 February 2002," and the "Speech by Mr. Straub on His Election as President of the Committee of the Regions, Brussels, 11 February 2004." Both documents are available at http://www.cor.eu.int/en/pres/pres_pre01.html.

three different concepts: assimilation, adaptation or transformation. Assimilation means that enlargement have not produced any change, a part, for instance, from the numbers of members of a certain institution, the languages used and so on and so forth. In this case the new members would be assimilated in the old institution without producing any discontinuity with the past. Transformation is the opposite: the entrance of new members would produce a profound change in most of the structural aspects of an institution. Adaptation is somehow in between, meaning a rather marginal change not only in the institutional settings but also in policy-making processes. It seems that the CoR falls in this third case.

The entrance of new members would produce an adaptational pressure on the old institution, whose consequences can be explained in terms of rationalist “logic of consequentialism” and sociological-institutionalist “logic of appropriateness” (March and Olsen, 1998)⁶. The former would provide actors with new opportunities and constraints in the pursuing of their interests. The more an actor is able to avoid constraints and to maximise opportunities, the more he will profit of the entrance in the new institution. The second logic would need a period of socialisation and collective learning process.

Both logics will be likely at work in the CoR. The CoR has open up new spaces for the (rational) promotion and defence of the interests of the new members producing, at the same time, a pressure for the (sociological) redefinition of actors’ behaviour and beliefs. How, in the long term, the two logic would be (or not) recomposed will constitute the agenda for further research.

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⁶ The literature on Europeanization process has study quite deeply the linkages between the “logic of consequentialism” and the “logic of appropriateness” with the adaptational pressure. See, for all, Boerzel and Risse 2000.

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