

# WELCOME TOOLKIT

Information for PES Group members and their staff





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Dear member,

Welcome – or welcome back – to the European Committee of the Regions!

As the PES Group Secretariat, we are thrilled to work with you and support you in making the voice of progressive cities and regions heard in the European Union.

The aim of this memo is to bring together some key information in order to facilitate your work as a member of the Committee and of the PES Group, make you familiar with procedures and explain what we can do for you.

We are at your disposal if you need additional information and are eager to work together for a fairer, more cohesive and sustainable European Union that leaves no one and no place behind.

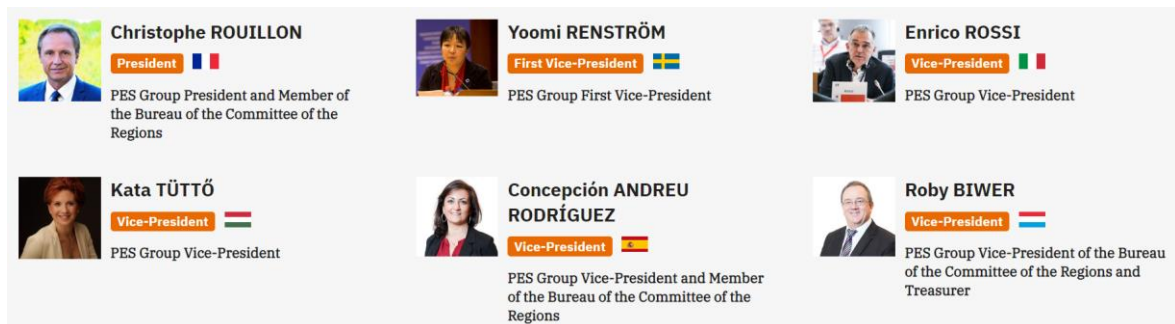
We look forward to working with you and wish you every success in your Committee mandate!

The PES Group Secretariat in the European Committee of the Regions



## Who we are

The **Party of European Socialists (PES) Group in the European Committee of the Regions**, led since 8 October 2019 by Christophe Rouillon (Mayor of Coulaines, France) and First Vice-president Yoomi Renström (Mayor of Ovanåker, Sweden), brings together social democratic and progressive locally and regionally elected politicians from across the EU, belonging to PES member parties or on an individual basis (see below). The Group aims to take forward a progressive European vision with solidarity, sustainable development as well as social and territorial cohesion at its core.



The **European Committee of the Regions (CoR)** is the EU's political assembly of local and regional representatives. Its purpose is to involve presidents of regions, mayors, and regional and local councillors in EU policy making, and thus to give a voice to European cities and regions, which are directly responsible for the implementation of around 70% of EU legislation. Thanks to their dual mandate at local/regional and European levels, the 329 Committee members and 329 alternate members from the 27 EU Member States play a key role in addressing the EU's challenges at grass roots level. Moreover, the Committee serves as a platform for regional and local authorities to meet and build a network to exchange best practices and promote a new vision for Europe.

## Our political priorities

The PES Group's political priorities constitute our common basis in terms of values and provide the framework for our political action. The political priorities are adopted by the PES Group at the start and at the midway point of the Committee's mandate. The current priorities adopted in June 2022 can be consulted [here](#).

They call notably for:

- > **TERRITORIAL COHESION FOR A SUCCESSFUL EUROPEAN RECOVERY AND A PROSPEROUS FUTURE** | Supporting a progressive, inclusive and sustainable recovery by ensuring a strong and robust cohesion policy as an investment tool for the future.
- > **MAKING SOCIAL EUROPE A REALITY** | Implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights starting from cities and regions.



- > **A PROGRESSIVE AND SOCIAL VISION FOR ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION** | A new approach to Europe's societal and growth model - empowering cities, regions and villages as catalysts of a society of well-being.
- > **A FAIR PATH TOWARDS THE GREEN TRANSITION** | Delivering a socially just European Green Deal, by placing planet and people first.
- > **PREPARING FOR A SOCIALLY JUST DIGITAL AGE** | Ensuring a socially just digital transition and cohesion.
- > **EMPOWERING CITIZENS FOR A MORE DEMOCRATIC AND POLITICAL EUROPE** | Strengthening and deepening European democracy by promoting innovative ways of citizens' participation in the EU's decision-making process.



The PES Group members at the Extraordinary PES Group meeting in Florence in November 2022 for a Europe for youth.



## Our rules of procedure

The PES Group's rules of procedure, adopted in December 2015, provide the guarantees for the Group's internal democracy and transparent functioning.

The rules of procedure:

- > define the members of the Group;
- > explain the bodies and duties of the Group;
- > establish how of the work is organised;
- > establish how the secretariat is to be organised and outline financial procedures.

They can be retrieved [here](#).



## How to become a member of the PES Group

A full or alternate member belonging to a national party that is a member of the Party of European Socialists is automatically a member of the PES Group.

A member not affiliated to a political party or affiliated to a political party which is not a member of the PES may submit a request for individual membership to the PES Group if that member adheres to the collective values referred to in the Preamble of the PES Group's Rules of Procedure. The Bureau of the PES Group, after consulting the national delegation concerned, shall decide on applications from members of the Committee of the Regions for individual membership of the Group. Once a member joins the PES Group on an individual basis, that member enjoys the same rights as any other member of the Group.



## Our internal structures: PES Bureau and PES Group meetings

The PES Group Bureau prepares the general organisation of the Group's work and its budget and coordinates the positions of PES members sitting in the Committee's Bureau. The PES Group Bureau consists of the PES Group President, the First Vice-President, the other Vice-Presidents and at least one member from each Member State of the European Union represented within the PES Group and proposed by the respective delegations, together with the following members in an ex-officio capacity: PES Group members of the Committee of the Regions' Bureau; PES Group Chairs of the Committee's commissions and the Committee's commission on financial and administrative affairs; and PES Group Coordinators of the Committee's commissions.

The PES Group meets during each Plenary session of the European Committee of the Regions, normally on the morning of the first day of the Plenary. In addition, it can hold two extraordinary meetings per year, one in Brussels and another one in the city/region of a member of the Group, following their invitation. These extraordinary meetings serve as a platform for PES members to discuss in greater depth subjects that are of interest to the Group, in line with its political priorities, while also representing an opportunity to exchange with the wider progressive family - in particular the S&D Group in the European Parliament. Group meetings may also include a study visit to projects that are being implemented in the city or region hosting the meeting. The PES Group members vote and agree on these statutory events at a Group meeting. The PES Group has an annual budget for organising thematic activities such as conferences, seminars and study visits.



Iraxte García, S&D Group leader, taking the floor at a PES Group meeting

## Gender equality as a principle

In May 2018, our Group adopted a **Code of Conduct on Gender Equality**, which commits the Group to ensuring that gender equality is consistently reflected in our political work. More specifically, the Code foresees that a 50-50% parity for PES members should be achieved by applying a strict gender equality policy in a number of areas. Moreover, the PES Group is committed to increasing the overall number of women nominated as members of the European Committee of the Regions, by raising awareness among the Heads of national delegations and the bodies responsible for Committee appointments. An assessment of the implementation of the gender equality principle is provided on an annual basis. Further information, infographics as well as a link to the adopted Code in English, French and German can be [found on our website](#).

## Our communication activities

Communication is central to policy-making. Our Group's communication team supports members in communicating about their work in the European Committee of the Regions and in raising awareness about the Group's political priorities.

The communication work (press, events, social media, videos, mailings, photography, etc.) is carried out in close cooperation with the members. The Group's communications can only be effective if its messages are relayed and disseminated by its members.

The Communication team is at the disposal of our members for advice and support at any time, including for the following activities:

- > advising members on how to communicate their Committee activities and the Group's political priorities;
- > supporting members with press work (press releases, contacts, pitches) both in Brussels-based media and with regional/local media;
- > promoting the Group and members' activities on social media;
- > producing video interviews with members and other videos linked to the political priorities;
- > running campaigns, such as the [#ProgressiveLocalStories](#) campaign, which showcase how progressive local and regional leaders are working to build a more sustainable Europe;
- > providing targeted communication trainings to members.

The PES Group organises events both in Brussels and in cities/regions across Europe, such as the extraordinary Group meetings, seminars and the “Progressive Local Labs”. The latter are local debates dedicated to fostering the exchange of best practices among progressive local and regional politicians, to connecting with the new generation of progressive leaders and to promoting awareness around important political priorities. A call is launched once a year to ask members whether they wish to host the Group for one of these events.

The Group has also set up a [network for young progressive regional and local politicians](#), and organises events dedicated to them, such as a training school in cooperation with the Young European Socialists (YES) and Party of European Socialists (PES). You can find out more about future and past editions [here](#).

The Communications Team shares information about initiatives, such as campaigns and events, as well as useful tips with members via regular e-mails. In addition, it provides members with a Communication Toolkit (which includes information about social media, live-streaming, etc.) ahead of each Plenary session or major PES Group event.

In order to ensure a more effective exchange of information and coordination, members are invited to share with the Secretariat the contact details of their communication officers.

A Communication Plan, reflecting the Group's political priorities, is adopted by the Group every year.

Follow us and get to know more on:

- [Website](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- [YouTube](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)



## Your work in the Committee and how we can support you

### The Committee's commissions

The six thematic commissions of the Committee of the Regions are responsible for adopting draft opinions to be submitted to the Plenary session. Most draft opinions are based on referrals to the Committee, which may be submitted by the European Commission, the Council and the European Parliament. The Committee can also place its own priorities on the EU agenda by issuing own-initiative opinions or resolutions in any area having a local and regional impact.

At the beginning of each five-year term, the Plenary Assembly sets up the commissions in order to prepare its work. It decides on their composition and thematic remit based on a proposal from the Committee's Bureau.

The composition of the Committee commissions broadly reflects the national and political composition of the Committee. Members of the Committee must belong to at least one Committee commission but may not belong to more than two.

Members of the same national delegation may, by mutual agreement, exchange seats on commissions in the course of the five-year term of office. To do so, the Head of the national delegation informs the chairpersons of the commissions concerned as well as the Secretary-General of such changes.



The PES Group President Christophe Rouillon together with some PES Group members and Young Elected Politicians 2021 in Sevilla for a “Just EU Green Deal”

The Committee's six commissions cover different policy areas, which can be summarised as follows:

- > **COTER** (commission for Territorial Cohesion Policy and EU Budget) is responsible for preparing the Committee's work in the area of economic, social and territorial cohesion, the Structural Funds, urban policy, transport and cross-border cooperation;
- > **CIVEX** (commission for Citizenship, Governance and Institutional and External Affairs) is responsible, among other things, for work connected with the Future of Europe, governance, external relations and neighbourhood policy, enlargement and the area of freedom, security and justice (migration, asylum and security);
- > **ECON** (commission for Economic Policy) is responsible, among other things, for the internal market and the digital single market, enterprise and industrial policy, economic and monetary policy, the European Semester, the governance aspects of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), competition, trade policy;
- > **ENVE** (commission for the Environment, Climate Change and Energy) coordinates the implementation of the "Green Deal" and is responsible for climate change, energy, environment policy, space policy and trans-European networks in the energy sector;
- > **NAT** (commission for Natural Resources) is responsible for work connected with agriculture, rural development, fisheries, the "blue economy", consumer protection, public health, civil protection and tourism;
- > **SEDEC** (commission for Social Policy, Education, Employment, Research and Culture) is responsible for work related to social policy, education, youth and cultural diversity, as well as research and employment policy.



### The Committee's commissions PES Group Chairs

At the PES Group meeting in June 2022, new commissions Chairs were elected. The PES Group is now chairing two commissions: NAT and CIVEX.



Chair of the NAT commission: Isilda Gomes, Member of Portimão Municipal Council



Chair of the CIVEX commission: Vincenzo Bianco, Member of Catania Municipal Council

The Committee's commissions usually meet five times a year and time schedules vary according to agenda content from half a day to one full day. They convene in Brussels, except for one meeting a year, held outside Brussels at the invitation of one of the members of the

commission concerned. The PES Group preparatory meetings, chaired by the relevant PES Group coordinator, are normally held from 10:00 to 10:30 a.m. in room JDE 53 and serve to prepare for the Committee commission meeting. Interpretation is usually provided in English, French and German. In the case of the annual external Committee commission meeting, the schedule of the political group coordination meetings is usually brought forward. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, these meetings have also been held in hybrid or remote format, subject to the health restrictions, via the webstreaming platform Interactio.

The PES Group Secretariat – on behalf of the PES Group coordinator – informs the members beforehand about the agenda and the opinions for which the appointment of a rapporteur is foreseen. In the event of competing applications for rapporteurship within the PES Group, a vote may be held at the PES preparatory meeting. The PES Group Secretariat is present at the meetings to assist members and support the coordinators, notably by preparing under their supervision PES voting lists.

The key to being an effective Committee member is to be present, engaged and informed. In particular, the PES Group must be able to vote at full strength in the Committee commission meetings. If a full member cannot participate, s/he is invited to find a substitute member of his/her political family and notify the change on the members' internet portal. In exceptional cases, the PES Group Secretariat can help with arranging a political and transnational delegation.

Presence at the PES coordination meeting is important in order to be aware of the Group's voting positions, amendments, appointment of rapporteurs and other political or institutional issues. It is also the place for members to raise issues of concern internally in the PES Group in relation to their respective commission. The rapporteurs (please see the section "Roles") should be present, and will in general introduce their working documents, draft opinions, voting lists and any political conflict.

After this meeting (normally between 10:30 and 11:00 a.m.), the political coordinators of all the political groups meet together with the Committee commission Chair, the commission Vice-Chair and the respective commission secretariat to discuss the meeting agenda, the appointment of rapporteurs and other issues of relevance.

The Committee's commissions also usually organise one meeting per year outside Brussels, at the invitation of a Committee member to his/her city or region. PES preparatory meetings also take place on the spot to prepare these meetings, but the logistical arrangements may differ (for instance, there is usually no interpreting available for the PES preparatory meetings outside Brussels).



PES Group Vice-President Kata Tüttő during a PES Group meeting

## **Plenary sessions**

Plenary sessions are held five to six times a year, usually over one and a half or two days.

If a member cannot attend a Plenary session, unlike in the case of replacements in Committee's omission meetings, a substitute can only be an alternate member within the same national delegation of the absent full member. To avoid political imbalances during votes in Plenary sessions, members are warmly encouraged to ensure delegations at national level within their political family.

Before each Plenary session, a PES Group meeting is held (normally between 10:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.) with the aim of establishing common positions on key political issues, and thus of presenting, as far as possible, a cohesive line for voting in the Plenary session. The PES Group meetings also provide the opportunity to hold internal group discussions and to debate with external guest speakers from other EU institutions or the wider political family.



A Plenary meeting





## The Committee's bodies

### The Bureau

The Bureau has the overall responsibility for financial, organisational and administrative matters. It also draws up the Committee's political programme at the start of each new term, oversees its implementation and generally coordinates the work of the Plenary sessions and of the Committee commissions.

As a rule, the Bureau meets seven or eight times a year: before each Plenary session in Brussels and during two extraordinary meetings, which are normally held in the Member State holding the Council's presidency.

The composition of the Bureau takes the following form:

- > President;
- > First Vice-President;
- > one Vice-President for each Member State;
- > 26 other members (depending on the size of the national delegations);
- > Presidents of the political groups.

A day prior to the Plenary session, the PES Group Bureau gets together in order to discuss and prepare for the Committee Bureau meeting which is held on the same day (please see Section on the role of the PES Bureau).

### The commission for Financial and Administrative Affairs (CFAA)

CFAA is a consultative commission of the Bureau, which deals with administrative and financial affairs. CFAA adopts the Committee's draft budget and submits the proposal to the Bureau and the Plenary session for final adoption. It also discusses any issue related to the execution of the annual budget and any question linked to the staff or to the administration in general. This commission was also set up in order to facilitate and encourage a closer relationship with the budget authority, but also to ensure that the Committee's priorities are taken into account and implemented in the annual budget procedure. CFAA meets five times a year and is chaired by a member of the Bureau.



Chair of the CFAA: Roby Biwer, Member of Bettembourg Municipal Council

### The Conference of Presidents

The Conference of Presidents, which consists of the Committee President, the Committee First Vice-President and the Presidents of the five political groups, plays an important role in tackling issues of high political importance and in assisting the Committee President in setting the Committee's Strategic Agenda.

## **Working Group on the European Green Deal**

The "Green Deal Going Local" working group was established in 2020 with three specific objectives:

- > to provide a crosscutting view on the numerous policy areas within the European Green Deal and ensure policy coherence and consistency across files and related opinions;
- > to reinforce the institutional outreach of the European Committee of the Regions on the Green Deal so as to place cities and regions at the core of the path towards climate-neutrality;
- > to channel the challenges that local and regional authorities are facing while implementing the green transition locally and communicate their achievements and best practices as to facilitate their replication across the European Union.

The working group is composed of thirteen local and regional elected representatives. Energy efficiency in buildings, agriculture and food systems, the circular economy, decarbonising transport, protecting forests, restoring biodiversity, clean oceans, zero-pollution, clean air, greening our cities, connecting rural areas, building a low-carbon industry and delivering a just transition for all: these are some of the policy areas that fall under the remit of the European Green Deal, with which the European Union has committed to become the first carbon-neutral continent in the world by 2050.

## **Bodies dealing with external relations**

### ***Southern and Eastern Partnership***

### **Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM)**

ARLEM is an assembly of local and regional representatives, which aims at giving a territorial dimension to the Union of the Mediterranean while maintaining a political dialogue and promoting interregional cooperation around the three shores of the Mediterranean. The Assembly has 80 members and two observers. Its membership is divided equally between the Mediterranean partners<sup>1</sup> and the European Union (32 members from the European Committee of the Regions with an equal number of alternates). The ARLEM Bureau defines the strategy

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<sup>1</sup> Egypt, Turkey, Algeria, Morocco, Syria (membership currently suspended), Tunisia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Palestine, Monaco, Montenegro (in addition, Libya participates as an observer).

and range of activities. The ARLEM commission for Sustainable Territorial Development draws up thematic reports that are then adopted at its annual Plenary.



ARLEM meeting

### **Conference of the Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Partnership (CORLEAP)**

CORLEAP aims to foster political dialogue between local and regional authorities from the Eastern Partnership countries and from the EU. It is composed of 36 members (with an equal number of alternates): 18 from the Committee and three from each of the six Eastern Partnership countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

### **Working Group on Ukraine**

The Working Group on Ukraine was created by the Bureau of the European Committee of the Regions in April 2020, under the auspices of the Conference of the Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Partnership (CORLEAP), as a continuation of the former Ukraine Task Force, set up in 2015. The Working Group aims to provide targeted political and technical support to Ukrainian partners to help them achieve good governance at all levels, reinforce local democracy and advance decentralisation reforms. The Working Group consists of 13 members and 13 alternates, out of which respectively four designated by the PES Group.

Since Russia launched a full-scale war against Ukraine in February 2022, the close ties between cities and regions of the EU and Ukraine gained even more importance and not only facilitated far-reaching humanitarian support for Ukraine, but also led to several cooperation agreements. The European Alliance of Cities and Regions for the Reconstruction of Ukraine was launched as a platform between local and regional authorities of the EU and of Ukraine to coordinate the effective and sustainable reconstruction of Ukraine, foster political dialogue, institutional cooperation and decentralisation, and provide Ukraine with assistance on a local and regional level to pave the way to Ukraine's accession to the EU. Further details on the Alliance can be found [here](#).

In October 2022, the Committee adopted by unanimity an opinion on "The role of EU cities and regions in rebuilding Ukraine" led by PES Group member Dario Nardella, mayor of Florence. Following on from there, the whole PES Group commits in 2023 to contribute to increasing support to Ukraine's cities and regions in their struggle for freedom, in the reconstruction and in the process of accession to the EU.

## ***EU enlargement***

### **Joint Consultative Committees (JCCs)**

Joint Consultative Committees (JCCs) are created with local and regional representatives of candidate countries for EU accession following a request from the government of the partner country concerned and on the basis of the provisions set down in the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) or in an official declaration of the Stabilisation and Association Council between the Council of the European Union and the candidate country. Currently, JCCs are established with Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia. An additional JCC with Albania could be created following a request from the country. JCCs are composed of an equal number of Committee members and of local and regional representatives from the partner country. JCCs are co-chaired by a Committee member and by a member from the partner country. Decisions are taken jointly. JCCs can adopt reports, which are also addressed to the respective Stabilisation and Association Council but are not directly involved in the accession negotiations.

### **Working Groups (WGs)**

By contrast, Working Groups (WGs) are composed only of members of the Committee, and do not have permanent members from the partner countries. The participation of local and regional representatives from the partner countries in the meetings varies according to the topics and the venue of the meeting. They usually constitute a contact point with the LRAs of the partner countries and are used as a tool to deepen specific bilateral/multilateral issues. Currently, two of these exist: one dedicated to relations with Turkey and one for relations with the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina and Kosovo<sup>2</sup>).

The first role of the Working Groups is to deepen the Committee's political examination and evaluation of the enlargement process in the relevant countries. Working Groups feed their political considerations into the Committee's internal decision-making process.

Brief practical information about Joint Consultative Committees and Working Groups:

- > Number of meetings: appointed members are expected to attend two meetings per year, one in the respective country and one during the Enlargement Days in Brussels.
- > Language skills: a good level of English is required because, as a rule, no interpreting in languages others than the JCC/WG one is foreseen for the meetings (except for Co-Chairs).
- > Work involved: the PES Group Secretariat prepares a briefing memo before each meeting and is available for any questions concerning the work of the JCC/WG.

### **UK Contact Group**

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<sup>2</sup> This designation is without prejudice to the positions expressed by the EU Member States on Kosovo's status and is in line with the United Nations Security Council Resolution No. 1244/1999 and with the International Court of Justice Opinion of 22 July 2010 on Kosovo's declaration of independence.



In 2020, the European Committee of the Regions established a contact group for relations with representatives of UK local government and devolved administrations to ensure that political dialogue with these representatives continues after the UK's withdrawal from the EU. Its aim is to act as a forum for continuing dialogue and political partnership between EU and UK local and regional authorities, and to exchange know-how, in particular on cross-border issues; to provide local and regional authorities with the opportunity to discuss problems or opportunities arising from the UK's withdrawal from the EU; and to give representatives of UK local and regional authorities a means of discussing EU legislation affecting them even after the United Kingdom's departure from the EU.

The mandate of the CoR-UK Contact Group comes from the bureau of the Committee. The CoR-UK Contact Group has a mandate to meet twice a year (possibly three times). The European Committee of the Regions delegation comprises 13 full members, selected with a view to ensuring a political, geographical and gender balance. Full members may be replaced by alternate members. The Committee's members are listed [here](#). The UK representatives at meetings of the CoR-UK Contact Group are selected according to agreements between local government bodies and the UK's devolved parliaments, assemblies and governments.



Chair of the CoR-UK Contact Group: Loïg Chesnais-Girard, President of Brittany Regional Council



### **What is a PES Group coordinator?**

In order to ensure cohesion among PES Group members and a common approach to the Committee's consultative work, the PES Group appoints one coordinator for each of the six Committee commissions.

The coordinator, assisted by the PES Group Secretariat:

- > acts as spokesperson for the PES Group on issues dealt with in the respective commissions;
- > invites PES members of the same Committee commission to attend the preparatory meeting just before commission meetings;
- > helps establish the Group's voting line together with PES rapporteurs or with PES shadow rapporteurs on any given opinion;
- > negotiates and agrees on the allocation of opinions amongst the groups, guided by a system of points which reflects the relative numerical strength of each group;
- > leads the group, in consultation with the members and, when applicable, with the rapporteurs and/or the shadow rapporteurs, during debates and votes in the Committee commissions and the Plenary session;

- needs to be able to work in one of the three languages of the PES Group (English, French or German).

### **What is a rapporteur?**

The rapporteur is the person who drafts an opinion, with the help of the relevant Commission secretariat, his/her expert (see below), and the PES Group Secretariat. Normally, the process starts with the preparation of a “working document” for an initial exchange of views in the Committee commissions, which sets out the structure and some key points of the opinion. This document should also contain questions in order to stimulate debate in the commission. In a second stage, a “draft opinion” is presented, which is to be discussed and voted on (with a formal procedure for amendments) in the relevant commission.

The rapporteur plays a key role in guiding the opinion through the Committee commission, setting the timetable and proposing amendments. He/she gets help from the PES Group Secretariat for this and will be the main point of contact for members of the European Parliament, European Commission officials, social partners and stakeholders working on the issue. PES rapporteurs also establish, in agreement with the PES coordinator, the PES Group voting list that will guide the voting procedure in Plenary.

The rapporteur may appoint an expert of his/her choice to support him/her in the drafting of the text and in contacts and meetings related to it. If needed, the PES Group Secretariat can help recommend experts. The PES Group Secretariat supports the rapporteur and the expert in the drafting of the opinion.

### **What is a shadow rapporteur?**

If another group appoints the rapporteur, our Group may appoint a shadow rapporteur, who will be our lead person on that opinion, following it closely, tabling amendments where necessary, coordinating all inputs from our members, liaising with our coordinators and/or rapporteurs on other commissions where appropriate, and negotiating amendments with the other groups.

### **How the staff of the Committee commissions' secretariats can help you**

The secretariat of each Committee commission assists the commission chairperson in organising the work and in preparing and distributing relevant documentation. The administrators in the commission secretariat work closely with the rapporteurs in drawing up opinions by preparing a background memo including recommendations on key institutional messages, finding facts and figures, setting up meetings with other EU institutions and stakeholders, and so on. The secretariats also assist commission members with background information for debates, and whenever they represent the Committee in events.

### **How the PES Group Secretariat can help you**

The PES Group Secretariat:

- advises the coordinator and members on the work of the different commissions;
- liaises with the Committee commission secretariat on the organisation of commission business;
- helps rapporteurs on the political aspects of drafting opinions;

- > coordinates the communication of the Group
- > facilitates cooperation between Group members handling a common issue in different commissions;
- > liaises with relevant contacts in the S&D parliamentary Group and stakeholders in the PES family and beyond;
- > negotiates with other Committee political groups;
- > advises members on positions for amendments and voting lists;
- > prepares for the Plenary sessions (briefing notes, amendments, voting lists, resolutions...) and related activities;
- > supports with communication activities, including contacts with the press, social media, videos, etc. (see “Communication” section).

The PES Group Secretariat is also available to answer any questions members may have on the day-to-day work of the Committee.

*Please see the “Contact us” section for the names, tasks and contact details of the Secretariat.*



## Working practices

### Summary

- > **A Committee commission is allocated an opinion:** The Committee’s President decides which commission is responsible for drafting a given opinion. In the case of an own initiative opinion, the member concerned – through his/her respective political group - submits their proposal to the relevant commission. Following a positive recommendation from the coordinators and formal approval by the commission, the proposal can then be submitted to the Bureau.
- > **Own-initiative opinions:** In the Committee, there is no formal limit on the number of own-initiative opinions. The priority for the Committee, however, is clearly the referrals received from the other EU institutions on legislative files. PES members are invited to discuss ideas for own-initiative opinions informally with the PES coordinators and the PES Secretariat in order to ensure their relevance and coherence with the PES Group’s political priorities.
- > **The political coordinators of a given Committee commission negotiate,** on the basis of a system of points, as to which group will draft the opinion.
- > **The group nominates the rapporteur:** The PES coordinator, after consulting the members sitting in the relevant commission, recommends who should be our rapporteur at the PES preparatory meeting.
- > **PES shadow rapporteur:** Where the opinion does not go to a PES Group member, the Group may appoint a shadow rapporteur to follow the file from the Group’s perspective and to liaise with the actual rapporteur.
- > **Expert:** Each rapporteur may select and appoint an expert to help him/her with the drafting of the opinion (for example an official from the rapporteur’s own local or regional

authority, an academic or some other type of expert). The expert is entitled to assist the rapporteur at all commission meetings and during the Plenary session where the opinion is discussed, as well as in other meetings during the preparatory phase of the opinion with representatives from EU Institutions and stakeholders and with other relevant actors. An expert will receive the same financial compensation as a member for his/her participation in the meetings related to the drafting and adoption of the opinion. The administrative aspects of the expert's appointment and of his/her reimbursement are handled by the Committee commission's secretariat.

- > **Timetable:** Together with the rapporteur and in consultation with the Committee commission chairperson, the commission's secretariat draws up a timetable that includes the deadline for tabling the rapporteur's draft opinion, a date for adoption in Committee commission and a proposed date for Plenary adoption. The deadlines for amendments (ahead of both Committee commission and Plenary) are based on these dates.
- > **Working as a team:** It is essential to ensure coherence and consistency of positions for the PES Group within and across the commissions. For this reason, it is important that all members communicate effectively with the PES coordinators and the PES Secretariat, in particular when tabling amendments or when they foresee political conflicts. In order to facilitate these exchanges, it is also very important to take into account deadlines for tabling amendments, leaving enough time to check amendments with the rapporteur and the coordinators of our group in advance.
- > **Tabling amendments ahead of Committee commission meetings and the Plenary session:** Amendments must be tabled in the members' portal using the respective username and password. The member's portal can be accessed via the following [link](#). To table Plenary amendments to opinions adopted in the Committee commissions by majority, it is necessary to provide six supporting signatures. The PES Group Secretariat can help to find PES members to support amendments that are in line with the Group's positions and ensure cross-national signatures.

**Members and their assistants/advisors are invited to send the draft amendments to the relevant PES Group Secretariat advisor before tabling them. This is a) to check the technical aspects of the amendments and b) to ensure political coherence.**

### How to find Committee commission documents

All Committee commission documents are available on the [members' portal](#).

### Language policy

The PES Group has three working languages: English, French and German. Written communications to our members are thus normally drafted in these three languages. Interpreting in the PES preparatory meetings prior to Committee commission meetings is also provided in these three working languages. The PES Group and Bureau meetings are interpreted in up to nine languages, depending on the attendance of members. For seminars and extraordinary meetings outside Brussels, interpreting is provided in a limited number of languages that varies according to room capacity, the participants, the location and the target audience.

### Communications to members



The Committee and the PES Group communicate all information to members via e-mail. The PES Group will provide you with preparation material for Committee commissions and Plenaries, such as voting lists and background memos. We would thus kindly ask members to make sure our e-mails coming from [pes-group@cor.europa.eu](mailto:pes-group@cor.europa.eu) are not marked as spam. Members need to indicate both the e-mail address where they want to receive the information and, where available, also the e-mail address of their assistant.

Members can choose to receive the communications in one of the three languages of the Group: English, French or German.

### **Job opportunities and traineeships**

The Committee of the Regions publishes vacancies on its website. In order to be recruited as an official by an EU institution, a person needs to pass an open competition organised at inter-institutional level by the European Personnel Selection Office. The Committee of the Regions also employs temporary and contract staff. Employees of local, regional and national bodies or intergovernmental organisations may also apply for positions as seconded national experts. More information is available [here](#).

Twice a year, the Committee provides the opportunity of having a trainee within the PES Group Secretariat. The two traineeship periods are respectively 16 February to 15 July (spring session) and 16 September to 15 February (autumn session). Trainees must first go through an official selection procedure organised by the Committee before being selected for a paid traineeship within the PES Group Secretariat.

Depending on availability and logistics, the PES Group Secretariat is likewise happy to welcome trainees wishing to carry out a study visit as part of their academic curriculum and under the condition that they are properly insured. A study visit can last for a period of up to four months. These are aligned with on-going PES Group activities and priorities.

Candidates for either traineeships or study visits can [apply via the following link](#).

### **Visitor groups**

The PES Group Secretariat regularly receives visitor groups (local and regional politicians, members of local party branches, etc.) If a group of your city or region is planning a visit to the European institutions and would like to visit the Committee as well, please get in touch with us.



## **Join the European socialist network**

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The PES Group, just like its sister Group in the European Parliament (Socialists and Democrats Group), is a full member organisation of the Party of European Socialists. It is represented within all PES bodies and actively contributes to establishing the priorities and course of action of the PES, raising awareness about the importance of the local and regional dimension in PES initiatives. The PES Group cooperates closely with the S&D Group and other member organisations of the PES, such as PES Women, the Young European Socialists (YES), the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS) and Rainbow Rose, while

building networks with PES representatives in the European Commission and the Council of the European Union.



PES leaders at the PES Congress 2022 in Berlin in October.

For more information:

- [Party of European Socialists \(PES\)](#)
- [Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament \(S&D\)](#)
- [PES Women](#)
- [Foundation for European Progressive Studies \(FEPS\)](#)
- [Young European Socialists \(YES\)](#)
- [Rainbow Rose](#)

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- > Conference of Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Partnership (CORLEAP)
- > CoR-UK Contact Group



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