



Summary of the CoR-EU's First AGORA Meeting

Tuesday 4 February from 17h00 to 20h30 at ELIA's Office
Blvd de l'Empereur, 20, 1000 Brussels

By Erik C. Post.

Introduction and words of welcome:

On 4 February, around 40 members of the Club of Rome EU Chapter gathered for a co-creative event to share their ideas on how the CoR-EU can seize this current moment of converging awareness around the need for 'Emergence from Emergency' and the opportunities offered by the European 'Green Deal.'

After briefly outlining the vision of the Club of Rome and the mission of the CoR-EU, President Roland Moreau introduced Ilse Tant, Chief Community Relations Officer for Elia, who opened the evening with a warm word of welcome. She explained that Elia strives to be an 'enabler and catalyst for the energy transition' as well as for 'the decarbonisation of society.' Importantly, Ms Tant shared her astute insight based on her wealth of experience with multi-stakeholder processes that 'collaboration' is crucial for achieving the required results in a manner that is accepted by all. Without collaboration and subsequent acceptance, she warned, the ambitious transition to a more sustainable society as foreseen in the European Green Deal will not be possible. Concluding on a positive note and with a message of hope, Ms Tant underscored how the European Green Deal presents a great opportunity for all of us to collaborate and facilitate the transition to a more sustainable society.

Live Poll - What do members think and expect?

After these words of welcome, Roland reiterated that the three key terms of knowledge, togetherness, and trust underpin this evening's conception and are the basis upon which the CoR-EU strives to operate. He notified the members that before exchanging views, a live poll will serve to gain a sense of the thoughts, expectations, and ambitions of the members. Below there is an overview of the poll's questions and results, as voiced by 25-30 members. Beyond these results, members also indicated that they would value training and capacity-building opportunities as well as events that expand the reach of the CoR-EU and that could attract more diverse new members. These results inform the CoR-EU on how we can adjust our operations, although more time is needed for collecting additional opinions and drawing final conclusions. Suffice it to say here that:

- the CoR-EU has not lived up to the member's expectations, except as network;
- there is a strong desire for more co-creative events and conversation tables;
- deepening the connections with the CoR and National Chapters will be welcomed;
- members are willing to actively contribute to CoR-EU efforts in multiple ways.

An exchange of views on the Club of Rome EU Chapter, the Five Hubs, and the Future:

Following the live poll, five members¹ volunteered to present a brief and non-exhaustive overview of the 5 'hubs' (which are the priorities of the CoR) from an holistic and systemic perspective. We thank them for their words, their enthusiasm, and for introducing the subsequent lively exchange of views. (*NB: all slides are attached to this summary*).

¹ Anne Goldberg, Patrick Corsi, Jacques de Gerlache, Jean-Philippe Cornelis, and Alain Peeters

Because of the rich conversation (at times a succession of monologues) and the many fruitful ideas expressed during the subsequent discussion, this summary will not attempt to capture its entirety or draw conclusions, but instead will highlight some common threads and points of contention, which include:

- The desire to leverage the prestige that the CoR carries to achieve tangible impact on decision-making structures.
- The need to conceive of a new message that offers a radically different and more imaginative vision of the future;
- Having to be intellectually honest and morally brave in confronting the challenge of clashing with our preconceptions, biases, and personal and other vested interests;
- The necessity of balancing holism with focus and of translating philosophical and civilizational projects into concrete actions without sacrificing ‘the big picture’;
- the urgency behind deeper involvement of the youth and the shift in teaching young people empty and stuck models of our Planet;
- The potential for enacting change on the one hand by acting pragmatically and through intensive collaboration with the corporate world, government, and other powerful players, while recognising the real limits that these actors face in moving towards paradigmatic shifts on the other hand;
- The centrality of empathy, plurality and openness in finding pathways to different futures in contrast to singular, hegemonic, and authoritative approaches;
- The power of emotions, values, and identities in shaping our decision-making and the challenge of ensuring evidence-and-science-based reasoning in decision-making;
- The strength of the Club of Rome as something that is more than the sum of its parts while leaving room for discussion, disagreement, and distinction.

This valuable discussion highlighted that there is considerable divergence between the members of the CoR-EU on these topics, although from a birds-eye view these generally are questions of accents, priorities, and interpretation within a strong convergent framing around the CoR’s vision and CoR-EU’s mission. Above all, the animated discussion in which many members participated confirms the that CoR-EU members want to actively co-create.

European Green Deal

Before continuing the conversations and enjoying the generously provided drinks and snack, Roland succinctly introduced the key tenets of the European Green Deal and raised the question whether it is compatible with the objectives and values of the CoR. He recommended members read the open letter about the Green Deal of Co-President Sandrine Dixon-Declève to Commission President von der Leyen, found [here](#) (*a summary of which is available in the slides*). In particular, he questioned whether the CoR-EU should embrace the Green Deal’s framing of ‘regenerative growth’ as the new main overarching strategy for the EU. Keeping this in mind, he nevertheless recommended we seize this unparalleled opportunity for focused and concrete common action to work closely with the CoR and the EU National Chapters to ensure the European Green Deal lives up to its highest ambitions and set the best possible standards. As Roland poignantly concluded, we are stronger as a group united in common cause than when we act as fractured and atomised individuals. We have the opportunity to show this, for example by organising an event related to the European Green Deal on the same date in each capital where the CoR has a National Chapter. The diversity would certainly be present, but the message of unity and connectedness would definitely prevail.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful for Elia's most generous hospitality (this event would have not been possible without the support of our fellow member Igor Lefebvre) and wish to thank Ilse Tant in particular for taking the time to enrich our evening with her insightful opening address.

Outcomes Live Poll:

For what reason(s) have you joined the CoR-EU chapter?	
Change public behaviour	11
Promote positive policy change	21
Discuss state of scientific knowledge	15
Brainstorm on concrete measures	15
Increase outreach of the "main" CoR	6
Network with peers	21
Other	2
How successful has CoR-EU been in fulfilling your expectations with regard to advocacy?	
Much more than expected	0
More than expected	0
As expected	11
Less than expected	10
Much less than expected	5
How successful has CoR-EU been in fulfilling your expectations as a scientific think tank?	
Much more than expected	0
More than expected	2
As expected	12
Less than expected	10
Much less than expected	3
How successful has CoR-EU been in fulfilling your expectations as a network organization?	
Much more than expected	0
More than expected	4
As expected	17
Less than expected	5
Much less than expected	1

Which activity do you value most?	
Lectures	7
Book presentations	0
Conversation tables	7
Co-creative events	11
Which initiative(s) do you expect the CoR-EU to take?	
Lectures	6
Book presentations	5
Conversations tables	13
Co-creative events	18
Which additional services would you value?	
information sharing	16
Digital events	8
Connection with the "main" CoR	20
Connection with other CoR Chapters	18
Other	7
How would you like to contribute to the CoR-EU?	
Attract new members	17
Giving lectures	18
Contact EU decision-makers	17
Provide meeting/event space	4
Donation and/or fundraising	4