



European Committee  
of the Regions

**Speaking Points for the closing speech**

***A new chapter for participatory democracy: towards a more resilient, inclusive democracy, and with citizen-centred***

**Vincenzo Bianco, President of the CIVEX Commission**

**9 March 2023, 12:55-13:00**

**CDR room JDE 52 + Interactio**

- Dear colleagues, dear participants, first of all I would like to thank you for inviting me to close this interesting event.
- I do so with pleasure, in my capacity as chairman of the CIVEX commission of the Committee of the Regions, which for several years has been engaged in political and legislative work on participatory democracy.
- The perspective within which we move is **to strengthen democracy, from local and regional levels to the European level, through greater involvement of citizens in decision-making processes and better communication of the activities of their representatives.**

- The CIVEX commission has been working on participatory democracy for several years, declining the theme according to three different and constant perspectives, which have also been explored during today's work:

(1) **participatory democracy and representative democracy are complementary, and the first is instrumental in strengthening the second.** It is no coincidence that the opinion drawn up in the CIVEX commission, which already in 2020 formulated a series of proposals and considerations on participation developed also in the other institutions, was entitled "Local and regional authorities in permanent dialogue with citizens".

(2) a broader and more meaningful involvement of citizens in decision-making processes also serves (if properly managed and organised) **to increase citizens' closeness to their representatives, trust in the institutions at all levels and shared ownership of the European project.** This was the subject of a 2018 CIVEX opinion entitled 'A reflection on Europe: the voice of local and regional authorities to rebuild trust in the European Union.

(3) Last but not least, any reasoning on the participation of citizens with a view to strengthening democracy in Europe **cannot be separated from a link with the current debate on the future of Europe and of European democracy.** In this sense, the CIVEX commission has contributed significantly to the participation of the Committee of the Regions in the

**Conference on the Future of Europe**, developing content and positions that have been echoed extensively in the 49 proposals adopted by the Conference last May.

- Beyond the concrete outcome in terms of content, what should be emphasised is the **innovation that the Conference has brought from a methodological point of view**, both through the European Citizens' Assemblies and through their 'significant interaction with representatives of the institutions in the Conference Plenary'. As has been repeatedly pointed out, this is a turning point for debates and practices, from which we will hardly go back!
- We must certainly develop, even with projects such as the one we launch today, the results of the Conference and its follow-ups. The perspective must be broad and tend to **incorporate participatory instruments structurally into the EU's political and legislative cycle**.
- Taking up what Vice-President Tzitzikostas said at the opening of this event, we also need to work on **linking these mechanisms at EU level (both permanent and non-permanent) with the different participation initiatives developed at local, regional and national levels**. These different levels need to systematically interact with each other. The CoR commits to facilitating such interaction at political and operational level, through the multiple initiatives and projects, such as the one presented today.

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- I wish every success to the project dedicated to the 'New chapter for participatory democracy' and look forward to hearing how it progresses over time.