



**European Committee  
of the Regions**

**SPEECH BY PRESIDENT TZITZIKOSTAS**

**MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF PRESIDENTS OF ITALIAN REGIONS**

**9 DECEMBER 2021**

Dear Presidents, Dear colleagues, dear friends,

Let me firstly thank you for your invitation and especially to President Fedriga for giving me the opportunity to address you today at a time when Europe's primary focus is on our recovery.

It was in April 2020, during the midst of the pandemic, when the European Committee of the Regions shared a call by all EU's regions and cities, to introduce a Recovery Fund, connected to an ambitious EU budget.

And today the Fund is a reality. But what is now important, is for regions and cities to be heard and to take part, in the implementation of the recovery plans. This is vital if we want every single euro of tax-payers' money to be invested where it is needed the most.

Tragically, the pandemic severely hit Italy but its response is now a model for other countries. The impressive plan of reforms and massive investment makes this country a unique laboratory for European recovery policies.

The unprecedented volume of investment you are going to deploy requires unprecedented cooperation between Brussels, Rome and all your regions.

And I was pleased to hear President Macron words last week, during our plenary session, when he said that "regions and cities are the beating heart of Europe". This confirms our indispensable role in building a European Union that is stronger, open and proactive.

This is also our strong commitment and contribution to the Conference on the Future of Europe: to go beyond Brussels, Strasbourg and the EU institutions, to reach every corner of Europe, every region, city and village.

And our 30 regional and local delegates want to send this clear message: We must bring the EU's decision-making process closer to the citizens and the places they live in.

People trust us, Europe's more than one local and regional leaders. It is time for Europe to demonstrate its trust in us too.

That is why we recently launched the "European Network of Regional and Local EU Councillors, open to regional and local politicians in charge of European Affairs. Already, nearly 900 regional and local politicians have joined the Network and I invite you to join it, too.



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The territorial dimension of European democracy needs to and must be strengthened.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am sure you know it first hand, as Italian regions and cities have a fundamental role, but allow me to underline the fact that, subsidiarity and multilevel governance are crucial to ensure effective and efficient decision-making.

And we can - we must - make all the necessary improvements, without Treaty changes if possible, or with them if necessary.

Concretely, we must strengthen active subsidiarity, which means enhancing the participation of local and regional parliaments and local and regional authorities, in shaping and implementing EU policies. This means applying subsidiarity in the EU governance process, such as the European Semester.

Dear Friends,

We are fully committed to promoting these values through our political work, initiatives and networks. For example, the Subsidiarity Monitoring Network and the Regional Hubs network, where Italian regions already play a strong, active role.

But also through our recent initiative the "Alliance of Regions for European Democracy". This is an informal alliance of Europe's regions with strong competences and legislative powers that aims to strengthen our role in the EU decision-making process. This Alliance, will gradually involve all of the EU regions, reflecting their competences and common interests, building synergy with our Committee and beyond.

In this context, we will start with a green-related topic as part of our work on the European Commission's legislative proposal called 'Fit for 55 package'.

In particular, we will focus on the part referring to the greening of the automotive industry that will heavily impact several European regions, including some in Italy. Many regions from Germany, Spain Austria, France, Romania, Slovakia, have already expressed their interest. The objective is to ensure that the territorial impact of new EU regulations is considered and addressed.

Our Committee will have our opinion adopted during our plenary in January 2022 and an event is foreseen in spring 2022. If you are interested, I invite all presidents of the Italian automotive regions to join our initiative.

If you wish, you can already ask your government to facilitate the Italian regions' input to the European Council's meetings alongside representatives of your central government. Under Italian



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laws and EU treaties, you have the right to ask for this so please use your powers when dealing with EU legislation that has a strong territorial impact, such as the Fit for 55 legislative package.

As President Macron told us last week, there is room to improve the relationship between the EU and its regional and local authorities.

For instance, this afternoon, at the invitation of the President of the National Council of the Association of Italian Municipalities Enzo Bianco, our CIVEX commission in charge of external affairs, will hold a seminar on peer-to-peer cooperation here in Rome.

We will discuss with the European Commission, Transparency International, the German Corporation for International Cooperation GIZ and ANCI about two new projects carried by the autonomous province of Trento and by Friuli-Venezia-Giulia and of Emilia-Romagna.

Dear colleagues,

Before concluding, I want to mention environmental protection and the climate emergency.

Let's be honest, the Glasgow COP26 cannot be called a success. There were some commitments, but there are major national gaps from major national polluters. Eventually, it will fall to the world's sub-national governments to make up for the failing of national government's lack of ambition.

So we must demand our national governments and EU institutions that the subnational level is actively involved in planning, developing, implementing and financing climate action.

Because we have shown that we are true pioneers: for example, here in Italy, Tuscany has set ambitious targets to achieve net-zero emissions even earlier than 2050. Or the Balearic Islands in Spain, that are boosting the social and circular economy through public grants, combined with sustainable tourism waste management and creating jobs for people at risk of exclusion.

Dear Presidents, dear friends,

We are here to empower your voice, the voice of regionally and locally elected politicians across Europe, who represent the most-trusted level of government in the EU.

We are bridge builders, and we build on partnership, cooperation, and your experience.

Finally, I would like to invite you, to our coming European Summit of Regions and Cities, on March 3 and 4, in Marseille, where we will shape and sign the Marseille Manifesto of Europe's regions and cities, a Manifesto on our Union's future, a Manifesto to bring Europe closer to its people.

Thank you!