



**European Committee
of the Regions**

The President
The Chair (COTER - Commission for Territorial
Cohesion and EU Budget)

Brussels, *date of official registration*
PCab/GL/rcs – D/1075 (2022)

Ms Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Commission
Rue de la Loi / Wetstraat 200
1049 Brussels / Brussel

Dear President,

European local and regional authorities, particularly those in border regions with Ukraine, are in the frontline of the humanitarian crises provoked by the military aggression by Russian President Putin against free Ukraine.

We therefore welcomed the flexibilities introduced by the Cohesion's Action for Refugees in Europe (CARE) and the possibility to use a significantly increased pre-financing tranche from REACT-EU to assist the refugees from Ukraine. However, these tools have a limited impact if they are not extended and the scope is not enlarged.

These crucial requirements were confirmed by the outcome of the attached targeted research carried out by the European Committee of the Regions, which has collected information on the experience of regions in managing cohesion policy emergency instruments to cope with the refugees' needs.

In order to ensure the impact and continuity of EU Cohesion policy support on the ground, we urge the European Commission to put forward a proposal for a review of the legal rules, allowing for:

- ✓ Extension of the 100% co-financing rate one more accounting year (2023-2024), until the end of the past programming period;
- ✓ Allowing the use of an extraordinary non-competitive procedure for the selection of projects related to the refugee crisis;
- ✓ Activate Art. 20 of the Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 laying down the common provisions of structural funds on temporary measures for the use of the Funds in response to exceptional or unusual circumstances for a period of 18 months to provide the necessary resources via cohesion policy within the 2021-2027 operational programmes;
- ✓ Allow managing authorities to declare overbooked expenditure before the final accounting year and provide more flexibility for non-functioning projects and for the phasing of projects into 2021-2027;

The extension and the enlargement of these exceptional provisions to the 2021-2027 period will help to make the best use of CARE and to complete as many projects that are in the pipeline as possible.

Yours sincerely,

Apostolos Tzitzikostas
President of the European Committee of the Regions

Nathalie Sarrabezolles
COTER Chair

Cc: Ms Elisa Ferreira, Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms
Mr Johannes Hahn, Commissioner for Budget and Administration