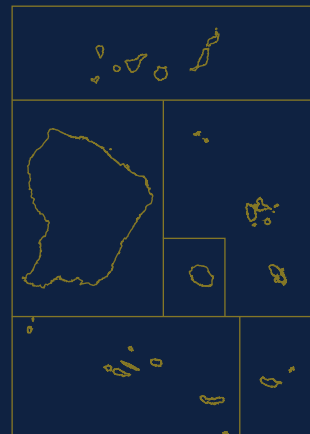




European Committee  
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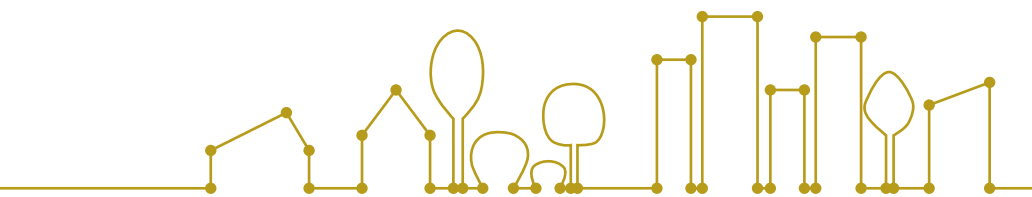


# The Future of Europe



The **cities** and **regions** need the European Union.  
The European Union needs its **cities** and **regions**.

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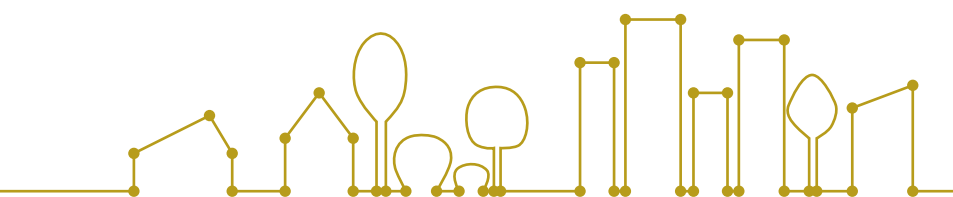
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# Introduction

This brochure is a collation of three documents published by the European Committee of the Regions on 9 October:

**1. “The State of the European Union: the view of Regions and Cities” address given by the President of the European Committee of the Regions, Karl-Heinz Lambertz on 9 October 2018.**

This year’s annual “State of the European Union: the view of Regions and Cities” address was held during the European Committee of the Regions’ plenary in Brussels. It was followed by a debate on the future of Europe with the President of the European Parliament, Antonio Tajani, and the Committee’s members.

**2. “Reflecting on Europe: the voice of local and regional authorities to rebuild trust in the European Union”, European Committee of the Regions’ opinion adopted 9 October 2018.**

In 2016, the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, requested the European Committee of the Regions to formally contribute to the reflection of the future of the European Union.

The opinion is the culmination of two years of debates and consultation with local and regional authorities and their citizens’ collecting their views on the future of Europe. The opinion was led by the European Committee of the Regions’ President, Karl-Heinz Lambertz, and its First Vice-President, Markku Markkula.

**3. “Reflecting on Europe” summary report of the 180 citizens’ debates and an EU-wide online survey held between 2016-2018.**

The content of this brochure forms the basis of the European Committee of the Regions’ position on the future of the European Union. It sets the groundwork for the preparations of the “(Re) New Europe: 8th European Summit of Regions and Cities” which is being organised by the European Committee of the Regions, its Romanian Delegation and the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union in Bucharest on 14-15 March 2019.

More information about  
the Summit is available at:

[www.EUlocal-Summit.eu](http://www.EUlocal-Summit.eu)



**«The cities and regions  
need the European Union.  
The European Union needs  
its cities and regions.»**

**CoR President Karl-Heinz Lambertz**

**In the presence of the President of  
the European Parliament, Antonio Tajani**

# «The State of the European Union: the view of Regions and Cities» address by CoR President Karl-Heinz Lambertz

So often, when we meet local and regional representatives and actors, we hear them say: “without the EU, it wouldn’t have been possible”.

“Without the European Union we couldn’t have built this bridge”.

“Without the European Union, we couldn’t have set up this exchange scheme for university students”.

“Without the European Union, we couldn’t have built this metro link”.

I realised a long time ago that what the European Union has enabled us to achieve in my city of Eupen and my region, it is also doing right across Europe. In the past I have fought for Europe’s support in helping my region to develop, and today I am fighting shoulder-to-shoulder with you to ensure that our cities and regions can build Europe.

Our Union’s most concrete achievements go far beyond the Erasmus programme, which is so often - and rightly - cited as an example. Both back home but also here in Brussels, our role is to remind people of these everyday successes, many of which would not have been possible without cohesion policy.

When the European institutions are campaigning for Europe, it is crucial that they highlight the Union’s direct contribution to improving the lives of Europeans.

No State of the Union address would be complete if it mentioned only the Member States, leaving out the local and regional level. The role of our Assembly of elected representatives is to remind the other European and national institutions that the Union does not begin and end with the Member States.

**The State of the Union is also - and perhaps above all - the state of its municipalities, its cities and its regions.**

We do not see Europe as two-dimensional, with only the institutions and the Member States.

**We see Europe in three dimensions, with its 100 000 or so local authorities and 300 regions. This third dimension is the democratic foundation on which we must rebuild Europe, with and for our citizens.**

Yes indeed, our cities and regions need the Union.

And it is precisely because they need the EU that they cannot accept any project for the future of the Union in which regional development is only partly supported by Europe, or not at all. How could we, as European local and regional elected representatives, allow the Union to neglect or even abandon its cities and regions? It is simply not possible. To weaken our municipalities, our cities, our regions is to weaken our Union. This must not be part of our blueprint for the future. Quite the opposite: by strengthening our territories we strengthen our Union.

A year ago, together with our partners in the Cohesion Alliance, we launched a call for a stronger Europe for its cities and regions.

Cohesion is not the exclusive business of our Assembly:

**cohesion is everyone’s business. As shown by the fact that 8 000 signatories have put their names to the call by the Cohesion Alliance, which now covers almost the entire Union.**

Among them are of course many representatives of local and regional authorities, but also signatories from very different backgrounds, ranging from the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) to the European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises or the European Patients’ Forum.

Cohesion is not a relic of the past and young people in Europe know that. I am delighted that the European Youth Forum has recently joined our Alliance. I can think of no more important or noble task than that of bequeathing to those who come after us a prosperous Union founded on the values of freedom, justice and solidarity.

Mobilising the Alliance has achieved results. As matters stand, cohesion policy covers all regions - an essential principle that was once under threat. But, make no mistake, we must remain on our guard.

Because cohesion is a policy that helps our territories to develop;

Because cohesion is a policy for the future, designed to tackle the great challenges of our time, while also meeting day-to-day demands;

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### **The local and regional elected representatives' fight to preserve the cohesion of the Union continues.**

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How can the European Commission loudly declare that:

"[...] cohesion policy is vital to Europe, its citizens, its economy and its cities and regions [...]"<sup>1</sup>

while proposing a 10% cut in this same policy's budget?

We reject these disproportionate cuts, just as our colleagues in the European Parliament's Committee on Budgets recently did. Common sense tells us that, whether we are talking about cohesion, the Common Agricultural Policy or any other policy, especially with a European budget that is already inadequate, we cannot do more with less.

We likewise reject any weakening of the role of cities and regions, such as centralising management arrangements. Centralisation is not a method for the future. It is a relic of the past. And, as pointed out by the representatives of French local and regional authorities in their Marseille appeal<sup>2</sup>, decentralisation is a model under which decisions and investment can be more closely aligned with real needs.

Of course there are budget constraints, there is Brexit, there are Member States who balk at contributing to the European effort, even though this is very modest for a population of 510 million, and although most of it flows back to the Member States.

We must aim high because time is short. The President of the European Commission has called on the Member States to reach an agreement in principle on the budget before the European elections. The leaders of the Member States sometimes give the impression that they are avoiding or putting off the work of agreeing the next European budget. This time-wasting is

creating great uncertainty, just when Europeans need prospects for the future.

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### **An exhausted Europe, lacking the means to act, would represent a victory for those who want to see its demise.**

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They are lying when they blame the Union for a bridge collapsing or for the under-funding of their own health system. And by destroying the Union they would also be weakening their own cities and regions.

Paradoxically it is the very same people who are reluctant to do their bit, whether in terms of respecting common values or contributing to the budget, who also condemn Europe's weakness - for which they themselves are partly responsible.

And when Europe proposes solutions, they are never happy. It is always too much ... or too little. They seek the destruction of a Union that has brought us more than 60 years of peace. We must never forget that "nationalism means war". To which I would add the obvious corollary, that "Europe means peace".

Our municipalities, cities and regions, and their elected representatives are a factor for trust and stability for the Union at a time when divergences and antagonisms are growing at national and European level. This stability is vital if we are to continue building a shared future. Local and regional elected representatives very often display pragmatism, not to say courage. They cannot take refuge in a virtual world of 280-character electronic polemics. Every day, they are in the front line, facing up to practical realities. They have to act.

Sometimes, it is possible for a local representative to do what a head of state or government claims is impossible or even intolerable. When the Hungarian Prime Minister refuses to do anything to take in migrants or promote integration, then our colleague Bart Somers invites him to his home city of Mechelen to show him that day after day, our cities and regions are building co-existence and successfully upholding the idea of unity in diversity. While the Council talks endlessly about "migration", at the grassroots I hear the word "integration" far more often. Dear colleagues, without wishing to make a great song and dance about it, this is where true responsibility and the European spirit are to be found. And this is also why, in cooperation with the European Commission, we are going to launch a campaign to highlight the integration projects being implemented in our cities and regions.

European democracy breathes with two lungs. The European Parliament of course, whose members are elected in our cities and regions.



And then the European Committee of the Regions, where local and regional elected representatives, from the smallest municipalities to the largest regions, work for the good of European citizens and the European project.

Next year, our Assembly will celebrate its 25th birthday. It is still young in terms of a person's life, and even in terms of the history of the European Union, when you consider that the European Parliament was born in 1952, the European Commission and the European Economic and Social Committee in 1958. Our institution must continue to grow, carried forward by a simple, powerful idea that is gaining ever more support: to build Europe together, from the bottom up, with the people of Europe. Our *raison d'être* is clear for any convinced European. It is up to us to make the most of our unique features to strengthen our contribution to European integration.

As Europe is buffeted by uncertainties, our Committee must continue to bind itself more closely to the European Union and anchor itself more deeply in every municipality, city and region of Europe. Our Assembly must become a forum where Europeans come together to shape their Europe.

### **Elected representatives from local and regional authorities are elected representatives of the Union.**

Dear colleagues, here at the heart of the Union, you represent your own territories. In your municipalities, cities and regions, you represent the Union.

Within the institutions, our added value lies in the fact that

### **we bring local and regional concerns to the European level and, in return, bring European concerns back to the grassroots.**

We must identify areas in which the Union could bring added value in support of local, regional and - of course - national action.

Some may think that there are "minor" and "major" debates, but I cannot think of any of our citizens' concerns that are minor or that can be neglected.

Back home, people tell us of the need for affordable housing, decent jobs, education for their children, transport, security, access to digital networks, business start-ups, development of rural areas and all the other things that are essential to the daily lives of Europeans. Our role is to convey these concerns, for which women and men in Europe expect responses, at whatever level of government. The European Union must

not be kept out of the picture, when it can bring added value.

We have to measure the "major" European debates against needs in the field. The debate on the budgetary and accounting rules for example. We have to show how and why the Union must mobilise local public investment, which alone accounts for half of all public investment. Europeans need this investment, which also creates wealth.

Public investment has been held back by the 2008 financial crisis and by the mismatch between the European rules and the needs of local and regional authorities.

It is essential to adapt these budgetary rules in economic and social terms. The European Union must heed the voice of the grassroots, such as the Declaration by the Mayors of EU Capital Cities adopted last month in the City of Brussels<sup>3</sup>. An important first step would be for Structural Fund co-financing, together with future investment, to be left out of the calculation of debts and deficits.

I said earlier that our cities and regions need the Union.

I would add that the Union needs its cities and regions.

Mr Tajani, in May 2017 you told our Assembly that:

"In our system of subsidiarity (we) are the closest to the citizen. (That you) need (our) help in getting Europe closer to its citizens. (That) we must listen more than we speak, and we must make sure that the ideas and concerns of the citizens pass through to our decision-making process".

You are right.

Our ties with the people of Europe must be strengthened, not least by talking with them about their Europe.

### **That is what we have been doing for two years now. 180 debates have been held in the 28 Member States. 176 members of our Assembly, from all the political groups, have taken part, meeting Europeans in 110 regions and 156 cities.**

Congratulations to all of you. The final record of these citizens' dialogues will be forwarded to the members of the European Council to feed into the discussions at their December meeting. The report has also been used for a Committee opinion<sup>4</sup> on rebuilding trust in the European Union, requested by President Donald Tusk and drawn up by our First Vice-President Markku Markkula and myself.

No-one has a monopoly over citizens' dialogues. Many national and European actors have also taken this positive step: the European Commission, the European Economic and Social Committee, MEPs and the Member States. Apart from the need to work together, we can draw four lessons for the future from this exercise:

- These dialogues help boost the democratic dimension of the European Union by mobilising and encouraging the broad involvement of civil society, whether this means community organisations, the social partners or foundations, for example;
- We need to get real feedback on the EU's policies. Listening is not enough. Citizens' dialogues must be organised and there must be follow-up to improve Union action in specific areas;
- Local and regional elected representatives must play a key role in organising and following up on these dialogues on the ground, and within the European institutions;
- **This European citizens' dialogue mechanism must become a permanent fixture after the May 2019 European elections.**

A sudden halt as soon as the elections are over could give rise to even greater frustration. Citizens' dialogues must be more than part of an election campaign.

We must get down to work straight away to strengthen the post-2019 democratic life of our Union. We must bring together people of good will. That is why I have proposed to the President of the European Economic and Social Committee that we work together to sketch out a permanent, European mechanism for citizens' dialogue. Our joint proposal, aimed at strengthening the link between the Union and its citizens in this way, will be the proposal of the representatives of civil society and of regional and local authorities - those who are closest to the people of Europe. We will share the outcome of our discussions with the Parliament, the Council and the Commission.

Democracy also means being close to the people, and hence subsidiarity.

Let's put things in perspective: it would be ridiculous to limit the application of the subsidiarity principle to a matter of time changes.

Maybe Europe needs to change its clocks: but above all it needs to change course. How can we still hesitate over finally creating a social Europe, when inequalities are growing and almost one

person in five is living below their country's poverty line? We see social need and distress every day at grassroots level. We see public services gradually crumbling. The Union must respond to these cries for help.

**Social rights must be recognised on the same footing as economic rights.**

Europe will be stronger if we first help those in the greatest need.

Let me return to subsidiarity.

**Because, while the Union is in need of a change of course, it is just as much in need of a change of method,**

if we are to succeed in tackling the great challenges and changes we face, such as the climate, demographics and the transition to a digital society.

Subsidiarity means a better Europe, because it works better.

Yes, subsidiarity must allow us to progress together towards a Union and Member States that work better. That is why Michael Schneider, François Decoster and I have advocated the active subsidiarity concept, as set out in the report of the European Commission's Task Force on Subsidiarity<sup>5</sup>.

The aim is not for action to be set in stone at any particular level of government. Neither is it a matter of stripping one level of government of its competences to the benefit of another. In any case, the Task Force, chaired by Frans Timmermans, has not identified any areas in which competences should be taken away from the Union.

To quote from the Declaration on the Future of the Union of the State Governors of the Austrian Regions<sup>6</sup>: the future of the Union cannot be reduced to "more" or "less" Europe. The guiding principle should be "more Europe where more is needed", and "less Europe where less is needed".

We should work on regulatory density and the added value of European regulation rather than engaging in demarcation disputes between levels of government.

**Subsidiarity also means a strong Union that uses its local and regional authorities to get closer to its citizens.**

As President Jean-Claude Juncker pointed out at the presentation of the Task Force's report<sup>7</sup>:

"Our Union cannot be built without the active and equal participation of local au-

thorities, the EU institutions and all the intermediate levels of government”.

We will present all these arguments concerning the way our Union is organised, which we have set out in our Innsbruck Declaration<sup>8</sup>, at the Bregenz conference being held in November by the current Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

And we will put our ideas into practice by setting up a new pilot network of regional hubs to support reviews of policy implementation.

The May 2019 European elections concern us all as they will be decisive for the future of Europeans and of our Union. Europe's actions must not be focused exclusively on this period.

We will set out our proposals for the future of the European Union, giving a voice to as many local actors as possible. Our mission is to unite people to convey a unifying message. In the coming days, I will, on your behalf, be calling on the local and regional elected representatives of Europe

to develop a message together to be set out in the Declaration of our Eighth Summit of Cities and Regions in March 2019.

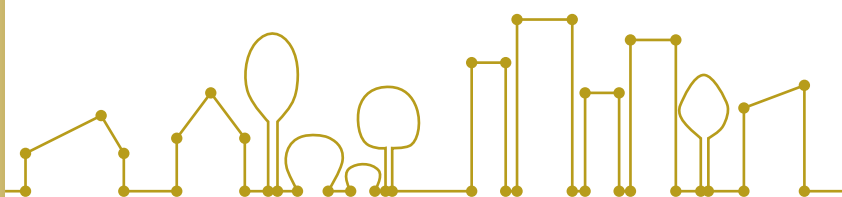
**The guiding theme of this summit will be rebuilding the European Union from the bottom up, in other words, starting from the municipalities, cities and regions of Europe.**

Our call will be addressed to the participants at the Summit of Heads of State and Government in Sibiu in May. And it will also be addressed to the leaders of the next European Parliament, and the next European Commission and Council Presidency.

Starting with the Declaration of our Bucharest Summit, we will continue our work by drawing up a blueprint containing our ideas for the next European Commission, explaining why,

**in every way, the cities and regions need the Union and why, in every way, Europe needs its cities and regions.**





## «Reflecting on Europe: the voice of local and regional authorities to rebuild trust in the European Union», CoR opinion adopted on 9 October 2018

The European Committee of the Regions

- Acknowledges the importance of listening to citizens' and local and regional authorities' concerns and meeting their expectations, in terms of an EU project built on more solidarity, cohesion and proximity;
- Signals that despite the fact that over two-thirds of respondents are convinced that their country has benefited from being a member of the EU, there is a widespread frustration with the EU, as the Union is often perceived as too remote and not trustworthy. At the same time, many people still feel that they do not know what the EU is and what it is doing. This is leading to a significant gap between people's expectations and the EU's ability to deliver. There is a lack of perceived benefit in tackling local issues, also partly due to weak communication, as well as misleading narratives and vocabulary used when addressing citizens and poor involvement in the decision-making process;
- Underlines the strong call of local and regional representatives to be fully involved in the definition and implementation of the EU project and for empowering EU action through the proper application of the subsidiarity principle; is reassured by the final report of the Task Force on Subsidiarity and Proportionality which stresses a new understanding of "active subsidiarity";
- Reiterates in this respect that anchoring EU policies locally makes a difference to people's lives;
- Considers it essential to build our union from the bottom up: the way forward for an EU democratic revival of the EU is possible through a grassroots engagement;
- Insists that facilitating citizens' participation in EU policies and co-creating a permanent dialogue with people beyond 2019 is crucial to for increase increasing the democratic legitimacy of the EU and to for bringing Europe closer to its citizens;
- Stresses the necessity need to ensure room to manoeuvre for cities and regions with a European post 2020 budget that meets ambitions and uses flexibilities to act and invest.

## *Preamble: the context of the local and regional representatives' contribution to rebuilding trust*

1. Having regard to the European Committee of the Regions' (CoR) Mission Statement, Brussels, 21 April 2009: "We are a political assembly of holders of a regional or local electoral mandate serving the cause of European integration. Through our political legitimacy, we provide institutional representation for all the European Union's territorial areas, regions, cities and municipalities. Our mission is to involve regional and local authorities in the European decision-making process and thus to encourage greater participation from our fellow citizens (...) We keep watch to ensure that the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality are upheld so that decisions are taken and applied as close to the citizens as possible and at the most appropriate level (...) We have a direct dialogue with our fellow citizens on Europe's achievements and future challenges and we help to explain and expound the implementation and territorial impact of Community policies";
2. Having regard to the five political priorities of the CoR 2015-2020 ("A fresh start for the European economy", "The territorial dimension of EU legislation matters", "A simpler, more connected Europe", "Stability and cooperation within and outside of the European Union", "Europe of the citizens is Europe of the future");
3. Having regard to the referral of the President of the European Council on 8 November 2016 asking the CoR to draft an opinion presenting the perceptions and the proposals of local and regional authorities on the future of Europe in order to help rebuild trust in the European project<sup>9</sup>;
4. Having regard to the European Commission's White Paper on the future of Europe, Reflections and scenarios for the EU27 by 2025 of 1 March 2017 and the subsequent five Reflection Papers;
5. Having regard to the Rome Declaration, signed on 25 March 2017, which states that the signatories "pledge to listen and respond to the concerns expressed by [their] citizens" and that they "will work together at the level that makes a real difference, be it at European Union, national, regional, or local level, and in a spirit of trust and loyal cooperation, both among Members States and between them and the EU institutions, in line with the principle of subsidiarity. We [they] will allow for the necessary room for manoeuvre at the various levels to strengthen Europe's innovation and growth potential. We want the Union to be big on big issues and small on small ones. We will promote a democratic, effective and transparent decision-making process and better delivery";
6. Having regard to the Letter of intent of the President of the EU Commission<sup>10</sup> which seeks to continue the White Paper debate on the future of Europe all the way to the June 2019 elections through debates, Citizens' Dialogues, interaction with national Parliaments and work with regions;
7. Having regard to the report "Reaching out to EU citizens: a new opportunity"<sup>11</sup> which states: "the regions also play a growing role in rethinking governance in the Union and its Member States. With their solid socioeconomic base and common cultural identity, they offer the right scale for policy orientations and adequate delivery in many policy areas, as they are important actors and intermediaries in the outreach to citizens"; and to the "EU Citizenship Report 2017"<sup>12</sup>, where it is recognised that it is vital

to strengthen citizens' sense of belonging and participation to the integration project;

8. Having regard to the three resolutions of the European Parliament related to the future of the European Union<sup>13</sup>;
9. Having regard to the launch of "citizen's consultations" in EU Member States from April 2018.

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### *Understanding and reporting the citizens' and local and regional representatives' perceptions and expectations on their EU*

#### *a) Local and regional representatives are working to make the voice of citizens heard*

10. Highlights that under its 'Reflecting on Europe' initiative launched in March 2016, it has been working to build trust between the European Union and its people through citizen and town hall dialogues and meetings with associations and assemblies of local and regional politicians as well as with a number of grassroots movements<sup>14</sup> and national and European territorial associations aiming at listening and reporting back the views, ideas and concerns of people on the European project;
11. Notes that, so far, over 176 political representatives of the European Committee of the Regions have engaged in the process by initiating and participating in Citizens' Dialogues as part of the "Reflecting on Europe" exercise. Over 40 000 participants have taken part in person or digitally in these events in 110 regions across all the Member States. More than 22 000 citizens have taken part through an online survey and mobile application as feedback mechanism allowing participants in the dialogues and citizens to contribute to the discussion remotely also;
12. Highlights that elected representatives from all the CoR Political Groups are participating in these activities and, wherever possible, are sharing platforms with representatives of the European Council, members of national parliaments, members of the European Parliament,

the European Commission and the European Economic and Social Committee; stresses that further coordination is necessary to improve the visibility and the impact of the outreach activities of all institutions and Member States;

13. Stresses the results of the survey commissioned by the CoR among local and regional authorities (LRAs), including CoR members and alternates, and their associations<sup>15</sup>;
14. Notes that in the majority of dialogues issues are seen by people through the prism of what happens in their region, city or local area; in this context, notes that EU politicians from regions and cities are thus on the frontline of citizens' concerns and expectations;

#### *b) What citizens told us: they want an EU project build on solidarity, cohesion and proximity*

15. Underlines that the main concerns expressed in CoR's citizens' dialogues<sup>16</sup> are slow implementation of solutions especially in the field of unemployment, migration and in the general socio-economic situation;
16. In this context, draws attention to the fact that many citizens have expressed a wish for more solidarity in the EU; this is a strong call for action to reduce the existing and in many cases growing inequalities in different fields, mainly by reinforcing cohesion and solidarity between and within Member States and regions; meeting this general expectation may require re-orienting and re-balancing a number of policies in the European Union;
17. Signals a widespread frustration with the EU, as the Union is often perceived as too remote and not trustworthy. At the same time many people still feel that they do not know what the EU is and what it is doing. This is leading to a significant gap between people's expectations and the EU's ability to deliver. There is a lack of perceived benefit in tackling local issues, also due to weak communication, as well as misleading narratives and vocabulary used when addressing citizens as well as poor involvement in the decision-making process;



18. Observes that Eurobarometer polls<sup>17</sup> show that over two-thirds of respondents are convinced that their country has benefited from being a member of the EU;
  19. Reiterates, in this respect, that the Member States have shared responsibility for finding solutions at European level to ensure that the EU has the capacity to act in relation to the major agendas, where it can bring real added value. At the same time they have to carry out the necessary national reforms, including sufficient funding, to ensure well-functioning local and regional management, where citizens can see that problems are being addressed;
  20. Highlights the fact that in many local debates and also according to the survey's results, the under-30s are the generation that is most enthusiastic about the EU, and they set great store by the freedom of movement and the educational opportunities offered by the EU; is also aware, however, that this generation has been hit hardest in many countries by the lasting effects of the economic crisis and by youth unemployment and is very critical of the European Union's role in this context; insists therefore that a much stronger future-orientation of EU policies is necessary and needs to be built into the EU decision-making system, with concrete action and more dedicated resources to address specific problems of younger people;
  21. Stresses that the concern of citizens that they are not sufficiently taken into consideration during the decision-making process often leads to different forms of distrust towards democratic institutions including those of the EU;
  22. Highlights that trust in the local and regional levels of governance on average is higher than trust in national government, and in most Member States it is also higher than trust in the EU;
  23. In order to rebuild trust in the EU, highlights the importance to clarify for citizens who is ultimately responsible for decisions at EU level and therefore calls for democratic accountability to be reinforced;
  24. Recalls that European integration is a project of giving political expression to a set of universal values and rights, but that many citizens are disappointed by what they perceive as the EU's inability to live up to, and uphold its own values; recognises that it is of crucial importance to continuously reconfirm the EU citizens' common values which are indispensable as the foundation of mutual trust and compromise;
  25. Considers there is significant potential for the development of a "civic European identity" among EU citizens with important rights and duties that affect their everyday lives; such an identity that is based on Europe's rich historical and cultural heritage would be important to increase the feeling of belonging by individual citizens to the "European project" and should complement and enrich national, regional and local identities that make up an individual's identity; while no feeling of identity can and should be imposed, it can be supported and encouraged through civic participation, cultural activities and education and should thus be supported by adequate measures and resources;
  26. Recognises that citizens living in knowledge centered and future centered societies can better spot the needs of their local communities and therefore are better placed to experiment and prototype evolving innovative solutions designed to meet local needs;
  27. Supports the demand from citizens for more channels of democratic participation and better communication with the European institutions via permanent and structured channels of dialogue. To this end, urges that the European Commission's communication strategy operating through its information networks be strengthened by means of regional authorities' potential for coordinating the Europe Direct information centers situated on their territory. This would multiply the impact of their work;
- c) The strong call of local and regional representatives to be fully involved in the definition and implementation of the EU project <sup>18</sup>*
28. Agrees with the representatives of the local and regional level that the priority

areas on which the EU should focus refer mainly to cohesion policy, followed by social policy (including education and mobility), economic policies (employment and growth), migration and integration, environmental issues (including climate change) and safety;

29. Highlights that both from the Citizens' Dialogues and from the survey among LRAs emerges a strong concern for young people, how to provide them with the right opportunities and how to meet their expectations;
30. Underlines that just as for citizens, solidarity is also a recurring concept for LRA representatives, as one of the European Union's key founding values;
31. Highlights that a majority of LRA respondents consider that more decentralisation and a better division of powers are essential elements of good governance because they increase transparency, accountability and quality of policy making as they allow a direct involvement of and engagement with citizens and allows place-based solutions; notes that the LRAs' involvement in the EU decision-making process brings added value to the policies pursued;
32. Observes that LRAs are keenly aware of the ever growing need for cooperation beyond national borders in order to meet the major challenges of our times such as climate change and natural disaster, globalisation in all its expressions, digitalisation and its social consequences, instabilities around the globe, demographic change, poverty and social exclusion etc. They also play a decisive role in implementing cohesion policy, including cross-border cooperation initiatives such as numerous small-scale and people-to-people projects which are particularly important as a daily concrete illustration of solidarity;
33. Highlights that LRAs also wish the European Union to focus more on EU citizenship rights such as the right to live, work, and study freely; in this respect, important work can be carried out by regional and local administrations, in cooperation with the European institutions, in informing

citizens of the real opportunities that free movement offers them to study or develop their careers in another Member State;

## ***Anchoring EU policies locally to make a difference to people's life***

### ***a) Addressing societal challenges locally***

34. Stresses that the EU policies need to empower people in addressing the issues that are important to their lives and to which all levels of governance, from the European to the local, need to provide answers;
35. Notes that the societal challenges ahead of us need to be addressed globally, but action has to be taken locally;
36. Recalls that cities and regions assure the connection between the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) and citizens by replying to their call for action through the tools put at their disposal by the EU; the 17 SDGs will not be reached without engagement and coordination with local and regional governments. To this end, all instruments aiming at supporting decentralised cooperation, policy coherence and the territorial approach should be fully exploited as they mobilise the potential of LRAs and of civil society to promote partnership and synergies between all levels of governance;

### ***b) Promoting economic, social and territorial cohesion for the citizens***

37. Stresses that tackling the persistent economic, social and territorial disparities remains a major challenge for the future of the EU;
38. Recalls that social, economic and territorial cohesion are objectives of the EU Treaty and their achievement requires addressing both structural and new challenges, promoting resilient societies and economies and a framework to harness globalisation;
39. Highlights the seventh report on economic, social and territorial cohesion, "My Region, My Europe, Our Future" which "shows how much cohesion policy is vital to Europe, its citizens, its economy and its



cities and regions and that reconciling sustainable economic growth with social progress, as cohesion policy is helping to do, is as essential as ever”<sup>19</sup>;

40. Calls for a strong cohesion policy beyond 2020 for all regions, based on the principle of European partnerships, shared management and multi-level governance as requested by the #CohesionAlliance Declaration;
41. Regrets that only a minority of citizens are aware of the positive effects of cohesion policy. Calls therefore for concerted efforts of all levels of governance to make the effects of different elements of the EU’s policies and funds better known;
42. Highlights that the EU urban agenda helps to tackle issues ranging from urban mobility to air quality, from circular economy to inclusion of migrants and refugees. Further emphasises the importance of urban-rural partnerships to tackle these issues more effectively. It also supports cities and regions to develop place-based innovation ecosystems and to implement smart specialisation strategies;
43. Underlines that Services of General Interest (SGIs) and Services of General Economic Interest (SGEIs) are an integral part of the European social model and social market economy, ensuring that everyone has the right and possibility to access essential goods and high-quality public services; advocates widening the concept of SGEI to new social services, such as reception and integration of refugees and migrants, social housing, minimum income or digital infrastructure;
44. Calls for more European partnerships between municipalities, cities and regions, including through twinnings, to operate as global forerunners in order to implement best-practices in tackling societal challenges and latest scientific knowledge;

### **c) Answering migration and ensuring integration**

45. Points out that in the perception of Europe’s citizens, the challenge of migration is one of the touch-stones of how “solidarity” is put into practice but that a common understanding of what solidarity means in this context still needs to be built; stresses the key role that local and regional authorities have to play in facilitating the reception and integration of migrants and in organising an open, rationale and humane debate about these sensitive questions;
46. Insists that municipalities, cities and regions must be supported in their roles in both crisis management and long-term integration. The EU needs to provide a coherent policy framework for migration, as well as sufficient targeted financial and technical support in addition to the member states, to facilitate the integration of migrants at the local level;
47. Underlines that integration policies for migrants must be developed in partnership between all levels of governance and supported also by appropriate financial instruments from the EU level as part of a comprehensive EU migration policy. In order to guarantee the highest chances of successful integration in the interest of both the migrants and the host society, several factors such as the migrants’ professional and language skills, existing family ties, their preferences and possible pre-arrival contacts with a host country should be taken into consideration;
48. Notes that an effective and humane management of the EU’s external borders and the development of a comprehensive migration policy and a common EU asylum system with common high standards are essential for all municipalities, cities and regions, in particular those hosting refugees and those situated at borders particularly affected by migratory peaks; stresses also that such a policy must comprise a coordinated approach to humanitarian protection, new paths for regular migration including circular migration schemes as well as efforts to combat the causes of migration and fighting human trafficking in all its forms, particularly the trafficking of women and children for sexual purposes and that this requires both new political commitment at all levels, and the appropriate means;

*d) Ensuring social rights and access to education and promoting cultural heritage*

49. Highlights that citizens strongly feel the need for the EU's social dimension to be developed throughout all EU policies and programmes, in complementarity to the existing national or regional gender equality and social protection schemes. Articles 8 and 9 TFEU provide a basis for that and should therefore be properly enforced. The CoR also supports the implementation of the social pillar regarding which LRAs should play a fundamental role and calls for a Social Progress Protocol to be included into the EU Treaties; aims at putting social rights on a par with economic rights; welcomes the fact that the Social Pillar has been included in the European Semester. The CoR supports the idea of a social scoreboard in the European Semester and is also of the opinion that social targets of a binding nature must be brought into EU primary legislation;
50. Insists that social investment should not be seen purely as a burden on the public purse. Financing social policies and protecting social rights, as identified at the Gothenburg Summit in November 2017, has a clear European added value which is fundamental in rebuilding citizens' trust in the integration process;
51. Underlines the key importance of helping citizens to access local and fair labour markets to eradicate unemployment, with special measures to help those groups most affected by it; seeks to draw up a plan for social targets to be included in a forward-looking social policy action programme, containing specific measures and concrete legislative follow-up investing in people, skills, knowledge, social protection and inclusion;
52. Calls for an EU that is fully committed to promoting equality between women and men and, in particular, to the prevention and elimination of violence against women, which is a universal, structural and multidimensional problem that generates incalculable personal, social and economic costs;
53. Insists that it is essential to invest in young people and calls on the EU to support LRAs in addressing the needs in the area of skills and education; calls for a new "alliance for skills and education" with the objective of boosting public investment in education, promoting mobility (ERASMUS+), fostering interregional co-operation in particular in cross-border areas and encouraging people-to-people exchanges not just in a professional context, but also in the cultural sphere;
54. In keeping with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, calls for regional governments to be involved in managing instruments such as the European Social Fund and the funds to support the application of the Youth Guarantee, as it is often at regional level that active employment policies, including social innovation and equality policies, are implemented;
55. Emphasises that in the field of education, it would be beneficial for school curricula to include the various elements which we share as Europeans, in different areas such as history, culture, heritage and even the European integration project itself. In any case, it furthermore highlights the importance of the work usually undertaken by local and regional authorities to make the European project known among school students;
56. Recalls that cultural heritage in its diverse forms is a major asset for Europe: it is a resource with the potential to become a key lever for more cohesive and sustainable regions in the EU that can help strengthen identity in a region as well as in Europe as a whole, and particularly embodies the EU's motto of "united in diversity";
57. Stresses that tourism and creative industries can transform the regions' cultural heritage into an opportunity for job-creation and economic spill-over, including through innovation and smart specialisation strategies.
58. Underlines that the European Union must champion and enhance the linguistic and cultural diversity to which it is home, foster

knowledge of it, and promote innovation and interregional cooperation in all cultural fields, as well as new business models in the cultural and creative industries;

**e) *Boosting research, innovation and digital transformation***

59. Considers that European funding programmes based on research, innovation, exchange, partnership and mobility that are provided in smart cities can enable better services for citizens thus improving their quality of life, and stresses that cohesion and the common agricultural policies can be vibrant and forward-looking also through Research and Innovation;
60. Calls for increasing the scale of innovation in the public sector and in businesses, including by the help of initiatives like "Science meets regions", bringing together politicians and scientists to discuss evidence-informed decision-making, allowing Europeans to co-create their future;
61. Highlights that digital transformation and e-governance support local public administrations. Citizens and business communities appreciate the European added value of such investments often as part of cross-border or interregional cooperation (including broadband for all), because they strengthen the resilience of the local economy and help in improving the quality of life at local and regional level;
62. Highlights that cities are places – both physical and digital – where people can meet, encounter new ideas, explore new possibilities, design the future in an innovative way, learn about how society is changing and what the implications are for citizens. Cities can therefore accelerate the process of local communities becoming digitally connected throughout Europe;
63. Therefore recalls that digital transformation represents a new instrument for cohesion and an effective tool for tackling demographic challenges: remote and rural areas, and the outermost regions, need to remain connected and transform their natural disadvantages into assets in line with the principle of territorial

cohesion. Innovation hubs, living labs, fab-labs, design studios, libraries, incubators, innovation camps supported by the EU and local actors boost local economy and facilitate stakeholders' accession to digital technologies;

**f) *Supporting the development of rural areas, securing the Common Agricultural Policy and promoting local production***

64. Recalls that rural and intermediate areas account for 91% of the EU's territory and are home to 60% of its population, and recalls that there is a significant development lag between urban and rural areas, where a sense of abandonment translates into growing Euroscepticism; therefore it considers that both the Common Agriculture Policy and Cohesion Policy need to continue to act as solidarity-based instruments to promote renewal in sustainable and innovative agriculture and rural development and it stresses that rural areas should be taken into account in all EU policies;
65. Interregional cooperation can be a key ingredient in optimising smart specialisation strategies, by generating synergies and maximising the performance of the global innovation drive;
66. Emphasises that the way we produce and consume food has a tremendous local and global impact not only on the citizens' well-being, environment, biodiversity and climate, but also on our health and economy; calls for the development and promotion of local markets and short food chains as food systems with a specific local dimension and urges that high-quality European production be promoted;
67. Considers the cuts in the second pillar of the CAP to be disproportionate and is concerned that this measure could be to the detriment of rural areas and the European Commission's goal of strengthening environmental and nature protection, as well as the EU's climate and resource protection objectives;

*g) Sustainability, environmental protection and the fight against climate change*

68. Points out that citizens expect global and local action to fight climate change and promote energy efficiency. Sustainability should therefore be mainstreamed in all EU policies with particular regard to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, energy efficiency, cleaner mobility, renewable energy generation and through carbon sinks and sustainable production and consumption. The CoR calls on the EU to provide a sound legal and political framework, within which regions and cities can develop their own initiatives to promote the achievement of the Paris targets;
69. Recalls that the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy and bottom-up implementation initiatives play a crucial role in achieving the objectives of the Paris Agreement, and calls on the EU to support the development of locally determined contributions to CO<sub>2</sub> reduction; sustainability and environmental protection in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the EU's other international commitments should be therefore mainstreamed in all EU policies;
70. Underlines the need for greater synergies between networks, projects and agreements aimed at addressing climate change and those dealing with disaster resilience, such as the Sendai Framework;

*h) Cooperation beyond the EU to support stability and development*

71. Recalls that the role played by LRAs in the cross-border cooperation and city-diplomacy activities beyond the EU, in particular in the enlargement process and the EU's neighbourhood, is crucial to promote grass-root democracy, sustainable development and stability;
72. Recalls that local authorities have a major role ensuring the security of citizens by preventing violent radicalisation and protecting public spaces; considering the cross-border and transnational nature of crime and terrorism, citizens and LRAs are facing the need for cooperation

and will benefit from the added value of the EU action for joint projects;

73. Recalls the CoR's position that any proposal for trade liberalization agreements must be preceded by a territorial impact assessment. Also reiterates that mechanisms at the national and local levels should be put in place to access relevant information on trade policy. Moreover, trade negotiations should be accompanied by a formal and participative dialogue between the responsible national authorities and local and regional authorities. This is crucial in particular where trade negotiations also cover areas of shared competences with Member States as in these cases, competences of the local and regional level are most often affected.;

*Ensuring the necessary room to manoeuvre for cities and regions: a European post 2020 budget that meets ambitions and uses flexibilities to act and invest*

74. Highlights that the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) must reflect the priorities and ambitions of the EU to meet its Treaty obligation and the expectations of its citizens; defends an MFF representing 1.3% of the EU27 Gross National Income (GNI);
75. Underlines that the EU budget should not be understood as a trade-off between net-payers and net-receivers, but as a joint tool to achieve our common objectives by providing added value throughout Europe. Therefore supports the findings of the Commission that we are all beneficiaries of the MFF because whereby the positive effects of a common market, security and cohesion outweigh the individual financial contribution to the EU;
76. Stresses that the future of the EU is dependent on an ambitious and efficient EU budget following the principle that additional tasks for the EU should also go hand in hand with additional resources and the phasing out of the rebates on national contributions;

77. Stresses that any recentralisation of the European budget, particularly through undermining shared management programmes and place-based approaches, could jeopardise cohesion in the Union and must be avoided;
78. Recalls that public service quality is a key determinant of trust in institutions as citizens assess governments from the perspective of their experience of service delivery and, taking into account that more than one third of all public expenditure and more than half of public investment is carried out at the sub-national level, stresses that the level of public investment in the EU remains too low to provide the right public infrastructure and services. Closing the public investment gap is therefore crucial;
79. Points out the need, ten years after the financial crisis which has greatly damaged the public investment of local and regional authorities, to strengthen their investment capacity by providing them with the necessary fiscal space needed to support public investments, promoting local solutions by strengthening the principles of shared management based on partnership and multi-level governance and by excluding public co-financing of EU programmes from the debt calculations in the context of the Stability and Growth Pact;
81. Emphasises that the shared responsibility and the close link between the principles of multi-level governance and subsidiarity are crucial elements of a genuinely democratic European Union;
82. Highlights that consistent application of the subsidiarity principle must in future be the EU's safeguard. This means "more Europe where more is needed" and "less Europe where less is needed", which will lead towards a more efficient and performing European Union. The mere logic of protecting Member States' interests against EU interference is counterproductive when discussing the future of Europe; is aware of its own role as one of the "guardians" of the subsidiarity principle and considers that the subsidiarity principle should be seen as a dynamic political and legal concept in policy making and policy implementation, with the purpose of ensuring that the most appropriate levels take the right action at the right time and in the best interests of the citizens; is reassured in these convictions by the final report of the Task Force on Subsidiarity and Proportionality which stresses a new 'active subsidiarity' understanding; will seek to implement the Task Force recommendations in close cooperation with the other EU institutions, national parliaments and local and regional authorities across the Union;

***Building our union from the bottom up: the way forward for an EU democratic revival is possible through a grassroots engagement***

***a) Empowering EU action: the right action must be taken at the right level***

80. Firmly believes that the proper application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality is of utmost importance in bringing the European Union closer to its citizens; recalls the importance of decisions being taken as close to citizens as possible and stresses the need for a fully accountable and transparent system of decision-making in the EU where citizens are able to recognise clearly who is politically responsible and accountable for the decisions taken<sup>20</sup>;
83. Reiterates its call to codify and implement the principles of multilevel governance and partnership in an inter-institutional Code of Conduct, and for them to be reflected in the Inter-Institutional agreement on Better Law Making. Beyond cohesion policy, multilevel governance shall be incorporated into all legislative and regulatory provisions of policies which have a regional impact<sup>21</sup>;
84. Deems it crucial to counteract any shifts towards centralisation, and to support the development of appropriate, place-based and effective solutions on the ground, notably in the future cohesion policy, serving as a model for governance also in other policy areas;
85. Recommends developing further the existing Territorial Impact Assessments (TIAs) in order to create effective feedback loops

that take into account the diversity of EU regions and the very different repercussions of EU policies on different LRAs;

***b) Involving regions and cities: renewing European democracy through ownership and effectiveness***

86. Stresses that the EU policies need to give people a proactive place in addressing the issues that are important to their lives. People seek solutions at the local level, better engagement in defining problems and help to deal with them. This people-centred, citizens-driven approach can solve many local challenges and demonstrate how the EU is relevant to citizens; it also means focusing the EU policy on strengthening the role of cities and regions with citizens' engagement through public-private-people partnerships;
87. Underlines that LRAs bring an added value to EU policies acting as laboratories to develop and implement new forms of societal innovations, solidarity and inclusive policies that citizens are expecting from the European Union;
88. Notes that this also means that not all citizens' problems can be solved through detailed rules in EU legislation. The principle of subsidiarity is not just about whether it is legally possible for the EU to legislate, but also whether the solutions make sense for citizens. If people think that the EU comes up with solutions that are meaningless in their daily life, it will only create greater resistance against the EU;
89. Is convinced that the EU's institutional system will have to continue to evolve and to be adapted to new challenges in the interest of achieving inclusive, transparent, democratic and effective decision-making; underlines that the role of local and regional authorities as represented by the CoR needs to be more fully recognised, both in the day-to-day running of EU affairs and in future adjustments to the EU Treaties where the CoR should be represented with full rights in any future Convention;
90. Strongly believes that the local and regional dimension needs be acknowledged in

the European Semester and that LRAs therefore should be involved from the beginning of the preparation of the Annual Growth Survey, in the drafting of the Country Reports and in the National Reform Programs; is convinced that to this end, the macroeconomic imbalance procedure (MIP) scoreboard should be enriched with regional indicators that will help promote and sustain the regional dimension of the EU Semester process;

91. Considers that the democratic legitimacy of the EU and in particular of Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) needs to be strengthened with the principles of social progress and equality of opportunity being at the heart of EU decision making so that employment and social standards are not being treated as peripheral to the macroeconomic adjustment process;
92. Considers that a better involvement of regions and of regional parliaments in the EU decision-making process could enhance democratic control and accountability;

***c) Facilitating the citizens participation in EU policies and co-creating a permanent dialogue with people beyond 2019***

93. Recalls also that the EU will gain in trust and credibility only if and when it delivers and if citizens receive clearer explanations of the European added value and the rationale and necessary compromises at the basis of EU decisions. In this sense, the CoR demands much greater efforts in the area of supporting multi-lingual, European media and information formats including easy to understand narratives, the development and deployment of European civic education modules for different levels of education as well as substantial increases in support for people-to-people meetings across European borders (exchange schemes at educational and vocational level, twinning programmes etc. . .);
94. Stresses that participative instruments such as the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) <sup>22</sup> should be strengthened; as a complementary tool to the existing structures of representative democracy



at EU level, and to innovative additional elements of participative decision making and permanent dialogue, ECIs can help to mobilise citizens around a common cause, highlight the European dimension of key political issues and foster the creation of pan-European debates and corresponding public opinion;

95. Calls on the CoR Members to continue engaging with citizens and listening to them through local events, town hall meetings and citizens dialogues in order to reach every region in the EU 27 and asks the other institutions to join forces; highlights in this context the aim to organise citizens' dialogues in all EU regions by the European elections in 2019 and encourages its members to organise dedicated sessions of their local or regional assemblies together with local citizens and their associations, in order to gather input to the questions on the future of Europe identified in the CoR's own, as well as the European Commission's questionnaire; stresses the crucial importance of decentralised communication on EU policies and the political choices underpinning them and the need for the EU institutions to support local and regional efforts and initiatives in this direction;
96. Highlights that citizens' consultation should also reach out to those citizens who are often ignored or are not interested in consultative processes; it is important to ensure a genuinely inclusive and representative dialogue with citizens to avoid that the debate is monopolised by those who are most mobilised already in favour or against the EU or a particular political issue;
97. Stresses that communication and permanent dialogue with citizens are vital in every political system and therefore essential to increase the democratic legitimacy of the EU and to bring Europe closer to its people;
98. Recalls in this context that engaging citizens must not be limited to the periods leading up to the European elections;
99. Commits to propose ahead of the European elections 2019 a methodology for a permanent and structured system of dialogue between citizens, EU politicians and institutions, involving local and regional authorities through the CoR and based on a transparent process of seeking citizens' input, providing them with the space and information to identify and debate the issues of greatest concern to them, feeding the results into EU policy making and giving proper feedback on the impact of the citizens' contributions;
100. Is convinced that by giving feedback to the citizens, the political work of the CoR members can strengthen the links with the grassroots and reinforce the trust of people in "EU politics".

Brussels, 9 October 2018

#### Co-Rapporteurs

**Karl-Heinz Lambertz** (BE/PES), President of the European Committee of the Regions, Senator of the German-speaking Community of Belgium.

**Markku Markkula** (FI/EPP), First Vice-President of the European Committee of the Regions and Chair of the City Board of Espoo.

Referral by Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, on 8 November 2016 asking the European Committee of the Regions to draft an opinion on "Reflecting on Europe: the voice of regional and local authorities to rebuild trust in the European Union".

# The «Reflecting on Europe» campaign: a dialogue between citizens, cities, regions and the European Union

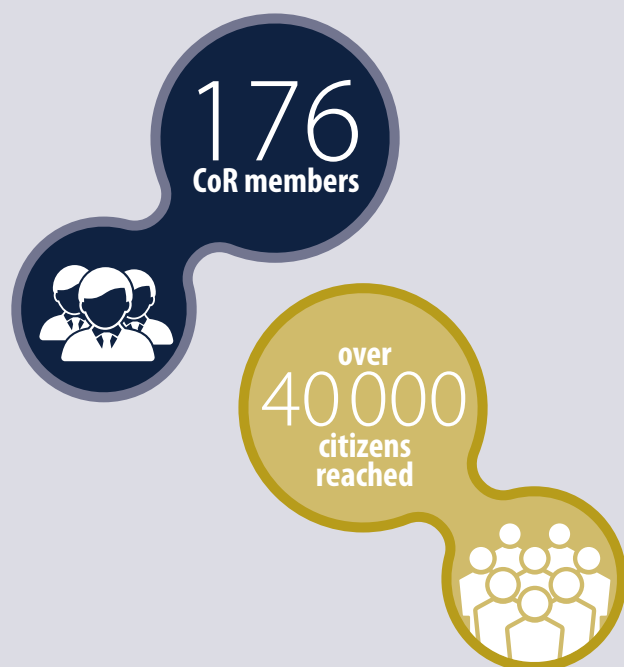
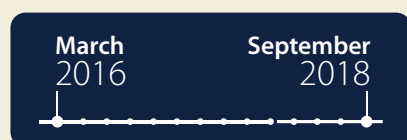
In 2016 the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, asked the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) - as the voice of cities and regions - to submit its recommendations on the future of Europe. Subsequently, the CoR launched its "Reflecting on Europe" campaign whereby members held local events with citizens in their regions and cities to hear their views. This brochure gives an overview of what citizens said they want in the future of Europe.

The CoR is committed to ensuring that the voice of regional and local authorities and their citizens is heard within the EU in an effort to make the European project more transparent, democratically accountable and develop new forms of participative democracy.

Complemented by an EU-wide online survey and consultation of local and regional authorities, the feedback formed the basis of an opinion - "Reflecting on Europe: the voice of regional and local authorities to rebuild trust in the European Union" - led by the CoR's President, Karl-Heinz Lambertz, and its First Vice-President, Markku Markkula, which was adopted during its plenary on 9 October 2018.



# Key figures



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## Cooperation with EU institutions

42

European Direct Information Centers (EDICs)

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European Commission Representations

3

EU Commissioners as speakers in local events: *Pierre Moscovici, Corina Crețu and Elżbieta Bieńkowska*

The President of the European Commission, *Jean-Claude Juncker*

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Members of European Parliament as speakers in local events



# Local events map



## Social media

more than  
**5 400**

social media posts using  
**#Eulocal**

over  
**10 000**

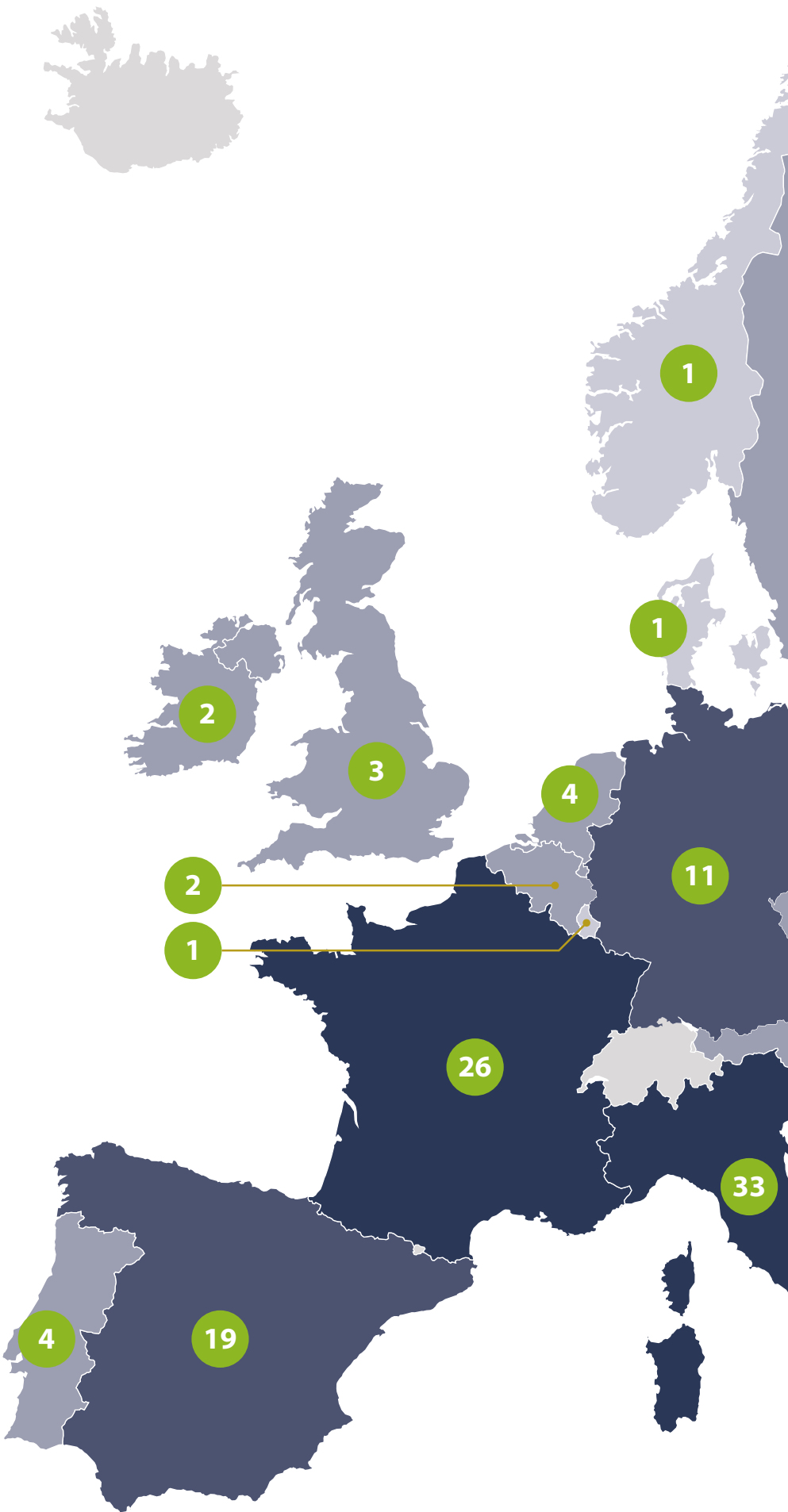
likes, shares and comments with  
posts using **#Eulocal**

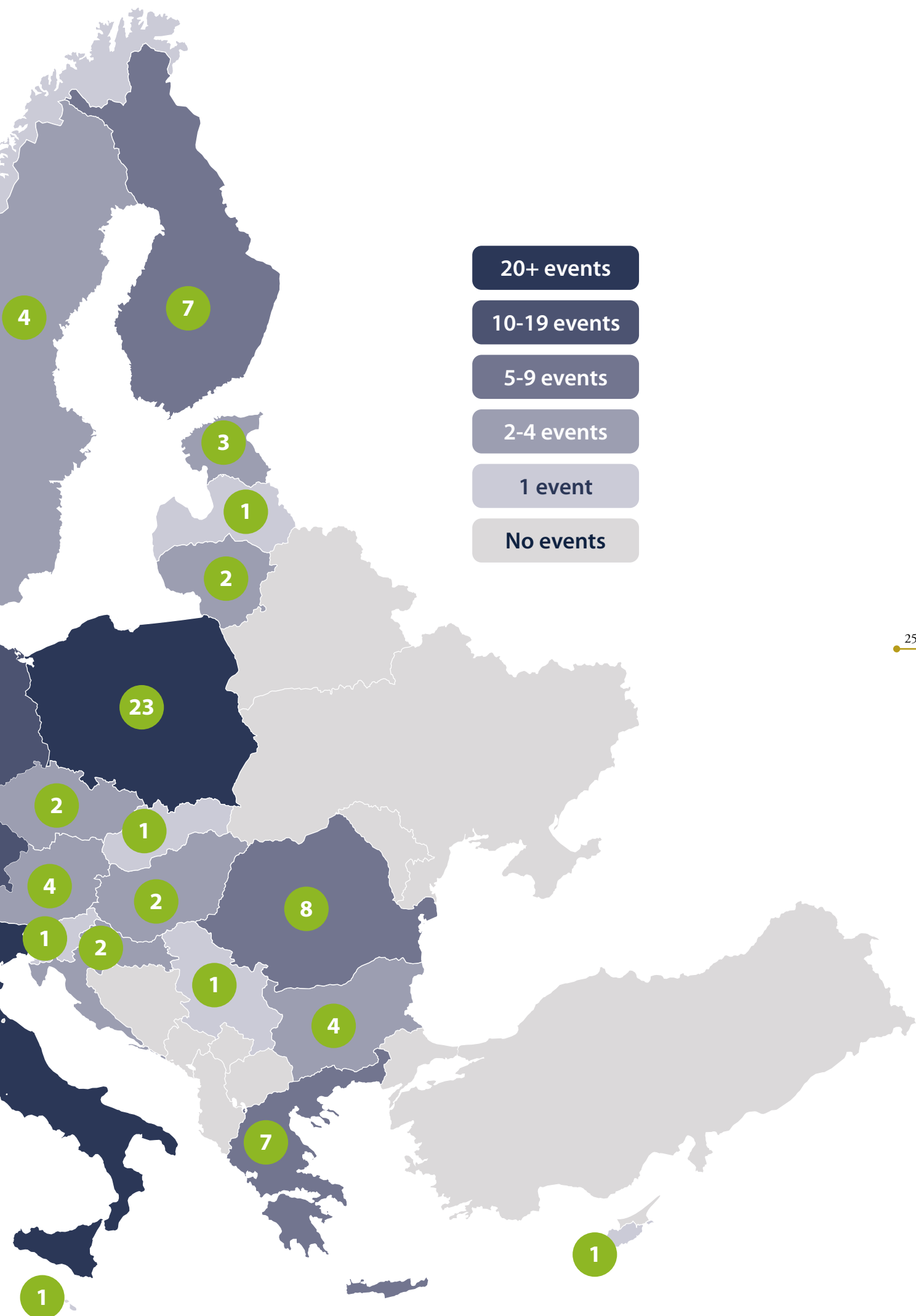
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## Media Impact

around  
**1 000**

mentions of "citizens' dialogue" in  
the press across Europe





# All politics is local

Local is real, national is not close enough, Europe is fading away. There is no direct link with the EU because of the lack of a local perspective

## Key Messages

- Democratic accountability is a recurring theme when it comes to discussing the European Union in local fora.
- The local level is the right place to start engaging citizens in the shaping of the European Union, especially on issues closer to the daily concerns of people.
- More direct channels of dialogues between the European Union and its citizens are needed.

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**We need to improve citizens' participation and democratic accountability.**

*Nikola Dobroslavić, Dubrovnik, Croatia  
28/10/2016*



**Europe is not Brussels. Europe is made by the citizens.**

**EU needs permanent dialogues with citizens, mainly with those who do not believe in the EU.**

*Karl-Heinz Lambertz, Brussels, Belgium  
01/07/2018*



**The CoR should facilitate a permanent channel of dialogue with young people.**

*Georgios Kaminis, Athens, Greece  
19/06/2017*



**Relations between European citizens and the EU have become distorted.**

**In view of the various crises it faces, it is necessary to improve the democratic accountability and functioning of the EU.**

*Paris, France  
04/04/2016*



**There is a need to improve the quality of democracy.**

*Budapest, Hungary  
online survey*



**With Europe – yes. With the bureaucratic union of the euro-officials – never!**

*Poland  
social media*

# Trust is the key

People doubt that politics and politicians can bring concrete solutions to their problems and this fuels mistrust

## Key Messages

- People perceive the European Union as too distant, too bureaucratic and too slow in responding to new challenges.
- People trust their local and regional politicians more than they trust the European Union or national politicians.
- The European Union must work to offer solutions to problems at a more regional level.



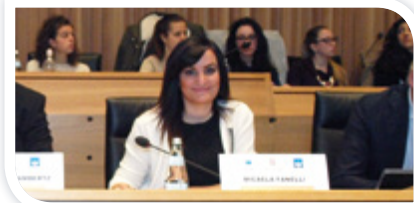
We need to return to a sense of ‘Community’, which has been moved away from in recent years, to pro-actively engage with local and regional government, and to promote the benefits of EU membership.

Kieran McCarthy, Cork, Ireland  
19/11/2016



We need to bring the EU closer to its citizens, notably young people.

Apostolos Tzitzikostas, Thessaloniki, Greece  
20/06/2017



It is important to make people understand about the necessity of Europe in reality. For young people, the daily usefulness of Europe is not always clear.

Micaela Fanelli, Bolzano, Italy  
17/03/2017



There is a need for the EU to support the bottom-up approach to provide solutions.

Milan, Italy  
05/12/2017



The EU must be more present and closer to its citizens, and not merely a distant voice through national government and heavy bureaucracy.

Rheinbach, Germany  
online survey



A positive narrative on Europe against populism and anti-European politics is needed.

Bolzano, Italy  
17/03/2017

# Europe still generates strong feelings

## Key Messages

- People are still enthusiastic about Europe but at the same time they feel disconnected from the way decisions are taken at the European Union level. This is a feeling that does not only concern their perception of the European Union but politics in general.
- Compared to the EU, "Europe" still has a positive image for most people, in particular when it comes to the values and benefits that the young generation associates with it.
- The notion of unity and a common European identity is particularly cultivated by the younger generations.

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Being a European activist is part of my DNA, just like fighting for the values of the Republic, defending freedom and striving to reduce inequality.

Christophe Rouillon, Coulaines, France  
28/05/2018



There is no single way of being European. We think the time has come to tell Europe our story, so that, together, we might find new solutions for the challenges we face.

Emil Boc, Cluj Napoca, Romania  
13/06/2017



My advice to citizens and regions is to get everyone on board. Citizens, schools, universities, businesses need to work together to have a positive impact on people's lives.

Tanya Hristova, Gabrovo, Bulgaria  
03/10/2016



More social Europe! In order to fight against populism and nationalism, we have to first reinforce a common European identity and a common sense of European community.

Seville, Spain  
13/09/2017



We are all Europeans ! There is one way –the European way!

Municipality of Nea Propontida, Greece  
14/10/2016



Europeans cultural integrity and values should be preserved. People should have the freedom of choice whether to accept non-European migrants.

Oeiras, Portugal  
online survey



# An alarming signal

People don't know what Europe is and what Europe is doing

## Key Messages

- Lack of knowledge about what the European Union means and does emerge from local debates across Europe.
- Understanding the role of the European Union requires improving information flow and people's engagement.
- Educating and communicating with citizens in an open and transparent manner should be a priority.



We need a roadmap to renew our Union, to make it simpler and reform the institutions and decision-making processes. We need to show that politicians can provide answers to people's concerns.

François Decoster, Caen, France  
22/05/2018



The knowledge about the EU is vague, especially when it comes to understanding which issues can be addressed at city, regional and country levels and which issues can be solved at EU level.

Stanisław Szwabski, Gdynia, Poland  
02/06/2017



People feel Europe is distant from them and unable to solve their problems. The alternative is to start from the bottom: a Europe of people and regions.

Raffaele Cattaneo, Milan, Italy  
15/12/2017



We need to improve citizens' knowledge and gain a better understanding of how Brexit and the EU legislative, political and socio-economic developments affect daily lives.

Huddinge, Sweden  
16/10/2017



Improve awareness of citizens about the EU and its policies, trying to fight disinformation, populism and regain trust.

Agrigento, Italy  
online survey



There is a need for civic education and improving information about employment opportunities.

Gdynia, Poland  
02/06/2017

# Sense of frustration

People are frustrated with the current project of Europe. Europe is not doing enough, or is doing too little: in any case it is not doing the right thing

## Key Messages

- Shared concerns have been voiced about migration, corruption, employment and the rule of law.
- The European Union is expected to step up its efforts in addressing challenges that go beyond the national borders.
- An innovative approach is needed to deal with issues ranging from digitisation to climate change.



The EU's management of the refugee crisis has been inefficient, but regions and cities have played a positive role.

Manuel Pleguezuelo Alonso, Gijon, Spain  
21/09/2016



We would need more and more engagement by CoR members in going locally and listening to citizens' concerns and proposals for the future of Europe.

Markku Markkula, Cork, Ireland  
19/11/2016



Transport in Prešov has been in a very poor condition for many years. We have been talking for thirty years about solutions but no solutions have been found so far.

Andrea Turčanová, Prešov, Slovakia  
19/04/2018



The brain drain from Romania, mobility, unemployment and policies to boost attractiveness of the region for the youth are the main concerns.

Cluj Napoca, Romania  
13/06/2017



Benefits? There are none. As a small business owner (SME) all I receive from the EU is red tape and more bureaucracy.

Copenhagen, Denmark  
online survey



Why does the EU not support Italy in the management of migration flows with a stronger programme?

Marcellina, Italy  
11/11/2017



# A strong call for more solidarity

## Reducing inequalities between poorer and richer regions

### Key Messages

- There is a strong call for greater solidarity across Europe.
- Responsibility and risk sharing are crucial in the face of the migration crisis, the financial crisis, and reducing inequalities between regions and countries.
- Cohesion policy can help deliver better living and working conditions for all people regardless of their place of origin.



Solidarity does not work one way! Now we have to go further: we want sanctions against those countries who are freed from their duty of solidarity in the area of refugee crisis.

André Viola, Carcassone, France  
20/04/2018



EU cohesion policy makes the EU perceptible at local level. Holding together is what the EU should be about.

Karl-Heinz Lambertz, Bremen, Germany  
17/04/2018



Cross-border collaboration is one of the most significant signs of European Union integration.

Pavel Branda, Liberec, Czech Republic  
02/11/2017



We need cooperation and solidarity among all European countries regarding the refugee crisis.

Breitenwang, Germany  
08/05/2017



We need to harmonise the high costs of cross-border travel and the right to be treated equally in Germany as in Belgium in hospitals.

Saint-Vith, Belgium  
15/11/2017



A way forward to better solidarity: reducing inequalities between poorer and richer regions.

Online survey

# Europe making a difference

The perception of benefits and of the European added value

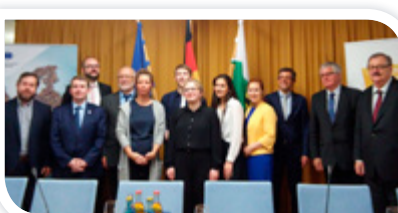
## Key Messages

- Freedom, mobility, investment, infrastructure and educational exchange are considered to be the main benefits stemming from the European Union's membership.
- Perceptions of the European added value vary across countries.
- People ask for a more active Europe in the area of education, environment, security and tourism.



It is virtually impossible to find a place in Tuscany that has not benefitted from EU Cohesion Policy.

Enrico Rossi, Florence, Italy  
11/05/2018



Irish people see Europe in a positive light due to the transformation Ireland has experienced after it joined the EU (from an agriculture-based to an export-driven economy).

Michael Murphy, Löbau, Germany  
18/04/2018



Thanks to citizens' dialogues, people can debate local and EU affairs, and learn more about the benefits brought by the EU.

Jelena Drenjanin, Huddinge, Sweden  
16/10/2018



The European Union can provide opportunities for smart specialisation. These will lead to new skills and knowledge, innovation, employment and, ultimately, a better quality of life.

Heraklion, Greece  
04/11/2016



For me personally, the EU has benefited my education as my school's lab was built with EU funding.

Szolnok, Hungary  
online survey



The EU benefits can be observed in a wide range of policy areas including environment, education, food and agriculture, mobility, freedom of movement, and media.

Berlin, Germany  
social media

# The way forward

Some food for thought

## Key Messages

- Opening up regional and local channels of dialogue is the key to bridging the gap between the European Union and its citizens.
- Every European citizen should be given an opportunity to co-create Europe's future.
- All politics is local - and this is the direction for the European Union to become stronger and more inclusive.

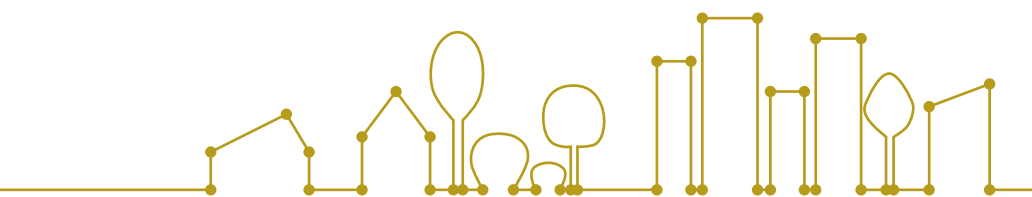


A new innovative approach to politics is needed that engages citizens and improves the quality of life in every city, region, town and village – this is the only way for the EU to emerge stronger and more inclusive.

President  
Karl-Heinz Lambertz

and

First Vice-President  
Markku Markkula





## Endnotes

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# (Re)New EUrope

8<sup>th</sup> European Summit of **Regions** and **Cities**



**Bucharest**

14 -15 March 2019

#EULocal

36

The 8<sup>th</sup> European Summit of Regions and Cities in Bucharest will be the largest gathering of mayors, regional Presidents and local leaders from across the EU in 2019.

Together with leaders of the EU institutions and governments, the Summit will debate the future of the European Union by rebuilding it from its municipalities, cities and regions. A Summit Declaration will be adopted, addressed to the EU Summit of 27 Heads of State and Government to be held in Sibiu on 9 May 2019, as well as the incoming EU institutions.

**European Committee of the Regions' President Karl-Heinz Lambertz:**

"The Summit will be a blueprint on how to build a more inclusive, democratic and united future of Europe that is closer to its citizens. Together, we will explain why the cities and regions need the European Union and why the European Union needs its cities and regions"



European Committee  
of the Regions



CoR ROMANIAN DELEGATION



romania2019.eu





## European Committee of the Regions

Created in 1994 following the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, the European Committee of the Regions is the EU's assembly of 350 regional and local representatives from all 28 Member States, representing over 507 million Europeans. Its mission is to involve regional and local authorities and the communities they represent in the EU's decision-making process and to inform them about EU policies. The European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council are obliged to consult the Committee in policy areas affecting regions and cities. It can appeal to the Court of Justice of the European Union if its rights are infringed or it believes that EU law infringes the subsidiarity principle or fails to respect regional or local powers.

Edited by the Directorate for Communication of the European Committee of the Regions

November 2018

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