Created in 1994 following the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, the European Committee of the Regions is the EU’s assembly of 329 regional and local representatives from all 27 Member States, representing over 441 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.

Europe closer to the people
Foreword

The last two and a half years have been extremely tough and challenging. Governors, Presidents of Regions, Mayors, Regional and Local Councilors were the first called upon to help people, saving European lives, communities, businesses, jobs and economies. And even in the most difficult situations, we never lost sight of our commitment to working for our Union, its local and regional governments and – most importantly – for all Europeans.

When the pandemic broke out, the European Committee of the Regions called for an EU Health Mechanism to help us hire more medical staff, buy more medical devices and support hospitals and schools. We measured the impact of the pandemic on our regions, cities and villages in our Annual Regional and Local Barometer, and we held one of the largest surveys of local and regional governments to ensure our views were shared within the EU. During the pandemic, and now during the war in Ukraine, we showed the power and the importance of cohesion for our communities and our Union to provide support and financing to SMEs and to close the gap and strengthen our economies.

At the same time, we listened to the young people and science, and put the climate emergency at the top of our agenda. We launched our Green Deal “Going Local Campaign” and we reinforced our partnership with the European Commission in areas including energy efficient buildings, zero pollution, 100 cities missions, but also in Research and Innovation. We stood together in solidarity when so many communities were tragically hit by natural disasters, recognizing that we best protect people by working locally as a Union. We raised ambition so that our communities become greener, more digital and resilient.

We ensured with a 30-members delegation, that in the Conference on the Future of Europe, the voices of local and regional elected leaders and their communities are heard and we organized local dialogues in regions and cities where we listened to people talk about their real needs. We continued to close the gap between Brussels and our citizens with initiatives such as the Network of EU Regional and Local Councillors and the co-creation of a European Charter for Youth and Democracy.

Our hard work was recognized by national leaders holding the European Union’s presidencies: we welcomed German Chancellor Merkel, our former member Portugal’s Prime Minister Antonio Costa, the Prime Minister of Slovenia, Janez Janša, and the President of France, Emmanuel Macron, to our plenaries. Their presence confirmed that our regions and cities are the beating heart of European democracy. And from the very first moments of the war against Ukraine, we launched an Info-Support Hub to help regions and cities help Ukrainian refugees. We have called for improving the access to emergency EU funding, to make it easier and faster for regions to access these funds to help refugees. And we are building a European Alliance of Cities and Regions for the reconstruction of Ukraine.

We achieved all of this by joining forces and working together with the regional and local governments all across Europe. And we will continue to walk down the same path together with the same energy and determination strengthening the role of the European Committee of the Regions and building the future of Europe, an open, more democratic, just, green and cohesive Europe.

A Europe closer to its people.

Apostolos Tzitzikostas
Apostolos Tzitzikostas presents the first EU annual regional and local Barometer, Brussels, 16.10.2020

Meeting with President of French Republic, Emmanuel Macron, 9.5.2022

Council of Europe Congress Session, Strasbourg, 24.3.2022

Slovak Regions Day, Bratislava, 13.4.2022

Meeting with President of French Republic, Emmanuel Macron, 9.5.2022

Council of Europe Congress Session, Strasbourg, 24.3.2022

CIVEX external seminar, Rome, 9.12.2021
Meetings with presidents of EU

It falls to all of us, to ensure that the EU acts on the demands of people, to reinforce European democracy, to improve the quality and impact of the EU’s law on people’s lives. It is through dialogue, compromise and multilateralism that we best represent the interests of our citizens. We must build a story of European democracy that offers not only hope, but results. A Europe of solidarity and cohesion. We have a responsibility to give concrete answers to the people’s needs in the places they live in.”
Regions and cities are the beating heart of European democracy. Your role in overcoming key challenges such as the energy transition, digital transformation or social cohesion is crucial.”

French President Macron

The Committee of the Regions is the local and the European levels brought together in one. It is therefore a key partner for the success of Europe’s fair, green and digital recovery.”

Portugal’s Prime Minister António Costa

It makes no sense to talk about a Health Union without taking into account the actual center of gravity of the health system, which is the regional and local level. We can also draw from a rich treasury of good practice when it comes to the green transition that cannot be carried out without a serious and systematic inclusion of the local and regional levels.”

Slovenia’s Prime Minister Janez Janša

Your perspectives, your experiences and your commitment are precisely what Europe needs to get through this difficult time in solidarity and to take responsibility on the ground.”

German Chancellor Angela Merkel
Regional and local leaders have been on the front line fighting the pandemic. In every corner of Europe, Mayors, Governors and Presidents of Regions have been working tirelessly to contain the virus, help the most vulnerable, protect our communities, safeguard local economies, keep services running and protect businesses and jobs. They have been fighting side-by-side with doctors, nurses and teachers. They have established platforms for e-health, e-governance and e-learning. And now, regional and local governments are essential to our European recovery and for building a bottom-up future for Europe.”
From the utmost horror of the war in Ukraine, to the ongoing suffering of COVID, to the ultimate threat of climate change, and to the challenges of delivering the green and digital transitions, cohesion policy not only was the first and most concrete sign of European solidarity, but has also provided flexibility and assistance to mayors and governors in protecting citizens, preserving local economies and supporting local communities. Cohesion is not just a policy, but a fundamental European value that must become the compass for all other policies.”
The success of the Green Deal, the ability to protect our forests, preserve biodiversity, make our food production more local and sustainable, support our local businesses to be even more innovative, make our buildings energy efficient, protect people from natural disasters, reduce, reuse and recycle our waste, depends on how far we empower, engage and support, Europe’s 240 regions and 90,000 municipalities. We can no longer afford to ignore the fundamental role of every region, city and village in delivering climate action, or we will continue to fail our children, our young people, and our planet. Time is running out. We can and we must change course together, plan together, and act together."
Investing in innovation is not a luxury. It is a crucial choice to improve our capacity to protect citizens, support local economies and be better prepared for future challenges. But we need to improve coordination between the regional, national and EU research and innovation policies so that they better support us in our green and digital transitions. Learning from the crisis we have been through, we must grow our innovation ecosystems more resilient to social and economic upheavals. We need to tackle the innovation divide so that no EU region and innovation ecosystem is left behind.”
Cities and regions, in the EU and the UK, will need to work shoulder-to-shoulder, to find ways to smooth and mitigate the impact on our respective communities, support tourism, work together to tackle climate change, and find solutions to maintaining the flow of trade across borders. There are so many untapped opportunities in areas of mutual interest and the role of regional and local authorities is crucial. It is through dialogue, compromise and multilateralism, not inward looking nationalism, that we best represent the interests of our citizens.”

The high representative for the Foreign Affairs of the European Union, Josep Borrell, 22.9.2020

Meeting with Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, 9.12.2020
The strengthening of European democracy must come from the bottom up, through a greater democratic empowerment of citizens and through local and regional elected representatives, in whom many citizens have greater confidence than in other political representatives. Local and Regional politicians can bridge the distance and improve proximity, both between the people and Brussels as well as among the peoples of Europe. The EU must finally move towards real "multilevel governance" in which all levels of government cooperate with each other."
The Conference on the Future of Europe has shown that citizens are asking for more transparency, more inclusion, more sustainability and more security. Through their proposals they clearly voiced their demands to simplify the EU decision making process based on subsidiarity and multilevel governance and make EU institutions more understandable. The Conference has also reinforced the notion that local and regional elected leaders are the link between citizens and national governments and Europe. Our Union can only survive if our citizens care about it and believe in it. And this is possible only if the EU represents a bottom-up construction. We see this Conference as a message of hope and we need to do everything in our powers to make this hope a reality.
Marseille Summit – Manifesto of Regions and Cities

Two thousand regional and local leaders in Marseille and thousands more online from their regions and cities across Europe, join their forces to reach for what we know is possible: A Union - stronger. A democracy – renewed. A Europe - closer to the people. With the Marseille Manifesto we proclaim together united, that Europe starts in its regions, cities and villages. The foundations of democracy in the EU lie within its 240 regions, 90,000 municipalities and over 1.2 million locally and regionally elected politicians, representing 450 million people. Born locally about 2500 years ago in the “polis”, democracy can only survive in the EU if it is well rooted on the ground and practiced every day.

With Roberta Metsola, President of the European Parliament, Apostolos Tzitzikostas, President of the European Committee of the Regions, Christa Schweng, President of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and Vasco Cordeiro, First Vice President of the European Committee of the Regions.

9th European Summit of Regions and Cities, Marseille, 4.3.2022

Manifesto of Regions and Cities, Marseille, 4.3.2022
1) Renaud Muselier, President of Region Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur
2) Roberta Metsola, President of the European Parliament
3) Apostolos Tzitzikostas, President of the European Committee of the Regions
4) Christa Schweng, President of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)
5) Vasco Cordeiro, First Vice President of the European Committee of the Regions
Ukraine

Ukraine fights not only for its territorial integrity, but also for our common, fundamental values. Ukraine’s fight is our fight too, the fight for freedom, democracy and justice and human rights. Europe’s regions and cities were the first to stand in solidarity and provide help and shelter to the millions of mothers, children and elderly people who left Ukraine due to the war. And together with the Mayors of Ukraine we will lead the process of rebuilding the country bottom-up starting from the cities. We will continue to stand as one, to stand with the Ukrainian people as a Union. Ukraine is one of us.”
Missions and External Meetings

Brussels and Strasbourg have one simply mission: to listen and serve people. Partnership, mutual respect, shared values, solidarity. This is the essence of our Union. This is the essence of three-dimensional democracy. European regions and cities bring people closer to Europe, but also bring Europe closer to its citizens. This is the message we shared through our Local Dialogues in all corners of our Union, in City Halls, libraries and universities across Europe. This is the message Governors, Mayors, Regional and Local Councillors share with their work on the ground, every day.”
Meeting with Mayor of Potsdam, Mike Schubert, Potsdam, 10.11.2021

Official welcome to Innsbruck, Austria, 30.9.2021

Meeting with Mayor of Rome Roberto Gualtieri, Rome, 9.12.2022

Meeting with President of the Republic of Cyprus, Nicos Anastasiades, Nicosia, 3.6.2022

Meeting with President of Andalucia, Juan Manuel Moreno Bonilla, Sevilla, 22.6.2021

Meeting with Mayor of Strasbourg Jeanne Barseghian, Strasbourg, 9.5.2021

Meeting with Mayor of Potsdam, Mike Schubert, Potsdam, 10.11.2021

Official welcome to Innsbruck, Austria, 30.9.2021
One-dimensional politics cannot address the daily challenges of the people, who do not feel understood and represented in Europe. Therefore, we need to ensure a proper functioning of a threefold democratic legitimacy with all three levels of politics working hand in hand. We must see our “House of European Democracy” with the EU being the protective roof, Member States – the strong walls and Regional and Local Authorities - the solid foundations. It is also time for the role of the European Committee of the Regions to be strengthened, by moving beyond its current consultative function towards a binding role in areas with a clear territorial dimension. This will lead to better regulation and greater democratic legitimacy in the EU. This is the way forward. This is how we will rebuild, recover and emerge stronger than before.”
The young generation has always been a political priority for the European Committee of the Regions, whether this means better access to high quality education, environmental protection, digitalization of services, access to labor market, or active participation to European Democracy and to European decision-making process. And we have set in place or proposed many initiatives such as the Young Elected Politicians program, the EU local Councilors, the EU Youth Councils or the European Charter for Youth and Democracy. Now I believe that change can only come from the younger generation. From the young people all across Europe, who still believe that there is a better way and they are willing to work for it. You are not only the future, you are also the present of our Union. You know Europe as it is, but you must be eager to forge Europe as it should be. Let no others decide for you. Take the future in your hands."
Created in 1994 following the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, the European Committee of the Regions is the EU’s assembly of 329 regional and local representatives from all 27 Member States, representing over 441 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.