A new roadmap for Europe's regions and cities
Complesso Monumentale di Santo Spirito – venue for the meeting of the CoR Bureau and political groups.
A new roadmap for Europe's regions and cities

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EUROPEAN UNION
Committee of the Regions

REGIONE LAZIO
The 50th Anniversary of the Treaty of Rome was a very special occasion for the Committee of the Regions and, looking back, I sense it may well prove to be a defining moment in the history of our assembly.

I think I can speak for all members of the CoR present at the commemoration ceremony and plenary session in Rome on 23 March in saying that we were privileged to participate in a truly unforgettable event.

The Auditorium Conciliazione, placed at our disposal by the President of Lazio, Piero Marrazzo, provided a splendid backdrop. And the setting was more than matched by the quality of the contributions by our keynote speakers, who included European Commission President José Manuel Barroso, Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi, Luxembourg Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn, German Minister of State for Europe Günter Gloser, Spanish State Secretary for the EU Alberto Navarro, European Economic and Social Committee President Dimitri Dimitriadis, the Mayors of Rome, Warsaw, Istanbul, Stockholm, Luxembourg, Maastricht, Dubrovnik, Wroclaw and Lyon, the regional presidents of Catalonia, Andalusia, Asturias, Tuscany, Sicily, Friuli-Venetia Giulia, Madeira, Aquitaine, as well as representatives of the European Youth Summit.

We were also greatly honoured by the presence of Italian President Giorgio Napolitano at the ceremony (together with his colourful military escort) and European Parliament President Hans-Gert Pöttering at the official reception. It would perhaps be remiss not to also mention here the wonderful contribution made by the Santa Cecilia choral singers: their rendition of the European and Italian anthems was spell-binding and really set the scene for the ceremony.
This publication is not designed to be simply a souvenir of the event, however. The main idea was to collect all the key political messages together and put them on the record. Many of us who were in Rome felt a real sense of renewed political momentum and, re-reading the quotes collated here, I can see why.

The statements are not only a reminder of everything achieved by Europe over the past 50 years, but everything that we can achieve in the next 50 years if we work together constructively.

The messages also serve to highlight just how far local and regional authorities have come and where they, as well as the CoR, fit into the modern system of multi-level government. Two days after our own Declaration for Europe, that question was emphatically answered by EU heads of state and government in the Berlin Declaration.

In my view the Berlin Declaration represents nothing less than a watershed moment for those of us who represent the sub-national sphere. Not only did it recognise the important role of regions in enriching the identities and diverse traditions of Europe, but it also made clear reference to the fact that “tasks are shared between the European Union, the Member States and their regions and local authorities”.

We have re-printed extracts from the Berlin Declaration in these pages, alongside our own Declaration for Europe. Re-reading them, it’s clear that they belong together.

I was very pleased that our declaration later received official recognition from German Chancellor Angela Merkel, in her capacity as President-in-office of the European Union.

I hope you enjoy this publication. I hope that it will enhance your sense of pride in being able to contribute to Europe's prosperity and to its cohesion. Last but not least, I hope it that it will show that 2007 really does mark the triumphant return of local and regional authorities to the forefront of European affairs. We represent the level of grassroots democracy where local solidarity is put into practice and we are ready to make a firm commitment to create a new bond of trust between the Union, its various levels of governance and its citizens.

Michel Delebarre,
President of the Committee of the Regions
A new and important thrust forward for a united Europe and a decisive revival of the constitutional process can come from the territories; from the regions, cities and municipalities of Europe. From all those local institutions that, in the field, day by day, create processes of integration. If our continent really wants to speak out with a single voice, it must learn how to listen to the voice of its territories … Our voice within the European institutions shows that the energy which comes from below is capable of bringing community politics nearer to their citizens’ needs and requirements. We must push down on the accelerator pedal.

Piero Marrazzo, President of Lazio Region, greets Romano Prodi, Prime Minister of Italy

Piero Marrazzo, President of Lazio, Italy
Voices of Member States and EU institutions
Hans-Gert Pöttering,
President of the European Parliament

"The new Europe we are building is one where regional and local authorities will matter more, not less, in years to come. The bodies you represent will be extremely important in delivering Europe on the ground. The European Parliament welcomes the real contribution you make ... in improving the quality of European decision-making and in helping close the gap between citizens and the European institutions."

José Manuel Barroso,
President of the European Commission

"In order to face this future confidently, we must show Europeans that we are prepared to invest political capital in European integration. For Member States, 2007 will be the year when they renew their commitment to the European project. You, the regional and local players, must convey this message to the people, to whom you are close: the past 50 years of progress are the best reason to have faith in 50 years of progress in the future.

In its Declaration for Europe, the Committee of the Regions calls for the foundations to be laid for a bond of trust between the Union, its different levels of governance and its citizens. I believe this to be a sine qua non for the success of our collective project. We are proving to those people who sometimes harbour doubts about the validity and effectiveness of Europe, that by facing our shared challenges together and deploying our coordinated capacity for action, we can truly influence the world around us."

Romano Prodi,
Prime Minister of Italy

“Europe is a Union of states and peoples, but also – as the developments since Maastricht show – a Union of local communities; I have always considered that the development of this local and regional dimension has helped to flesh out the idea of European citizenship, with substance and content. And that it has an even more crucial part to play in future. The regional and local authorities are becoming increasingly more involved in the front line of European policies; at the same time, through the Union, they themselves are becoming players in the globalisation process. The European Union is helping to internationalise the local authorities, while the local authorities are helping Europe to become an influential global player.”

Massimo D'Alema,
Minister for Foreign Affairs, Italy

“Fifty years ago Europe was a choice, brilliantly implemented by high-calibre, far-sighted political leaders. A choice which brought reconciliation within Europe after the Second World War, the removal of economic barriers and the single market, social and territorial cohesion and the single currency. Now, faced with the global challenges before us, Europe has become a need.”

Günter Gloser,
Minister of State for Europe, Germany

“I believe that we will be able to win back the support of European citizens for the integration process if we explain to them that we can only deal with international challenges by working together. The Committee of the Regions is an essential link in ensuring that the Community legislative process reflects local and regional circumstances and in particular people's expectations. Together, we Europeans are in a position to take our future into our own hands and to shape it actively.”
Linda Lanzillotta,
Minister of Regional Affairs, Italy

“Of the many processes and phenomena that have occupied the Union in the past decades and in the crucial years of monetary union, one of the greatest and most significant has been the vitality of sub-national tiers of government and the very active involvement of the regions. We can rely on the regions to look to Europe’s next fifty years with optimism and forward political thinking.”

Bronisław Geremek,
MEP and former Foreign Minister, Poland

“The advantages and benefits of decentralisation are undeniable and difficult to ignore: the governance of societies is more effective and more democratic if decisions are taken at the closest possible level to the people and the communities they affect. Each of us is, above all, a citizen of his own "country in miniature", his municipality, his town, his region. He views his country through the prism of local life which closely affects him and concerns him. By placing a major part of government power close to the people, decentralisation allows him to take part in the effective exercise of power.”
The underlying philosophy of the policy is that economic growth is dependent on investment in physical and in human capital. Assisted regions and cities are more capable of diversifying. Cohesion policy makes the Union visible to citizens, enterprises and local authorities. Simply put, people who find a new job, use a better transport system or live in a cleaner natural environment, feel that the Community action matches their expectations. In turn, through the participation in the cohesion policy design and making, they also feel empowered and capable of contributing to the Union’s future.

Danuta Hübner, Commissioner for Regional Policy

Regional and local authorities now play an ever greater role in the implementation of Community policies, be they of a legislative, regulatory or budgetary nature. A substantial part of EU programme budgets is directly administered by local and regional authorities in Member States. The success of the Lisbon process also depends on the active participation of the regions at EU level, through the Committee of the Regions, and at Member State level.

Jean Asselborn, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Luxembourg
Dimitris Dimitriadis,
President of the European Economic and Social Committee

If we seek the cohesion of our citizens, we must talk about one Europe with a human face: a face sculpted by all the daily concerns and expectations. Europe must identify itself with every citizen. Europe must be near its citizens.

Alberto Navarro,
State Secretary for the EU, Spain

We cannot resign ourselves to a Europe that is no more than a huge market or free trade area. We need a Europe that is a leading player, not just a spectator; that promotes our values and defends our interests; that protects its citizens, keeping them safer both inside and outside its borders. We want a political Europe that speaks with one voice. We need a socially cohesive Europe, because solidarity is a sign of identity, of how we see the world. Europe will be built with its citizens, or not at all. It is precisely in this area that the regions and local bodies, as institutions which are closer to the public, and, thus, the Committee of the Regions, play a fundamental role.
We, the members of the Committee of the Regions (CoR), elected representatives of the regions, local authorities and cities of Europe, recognise the invaluable contribution made by the European Union to peace, democracy and prosperity over the last fifty years and are proud to have made our own contribution...

Thanks to the European project:

– the people of Europe daily reap the benefits of a huge border-free area of political, economic and monetary stability...

– the spread of democracy and the development of the European social model provide incomparable opportunities for individual and collective fulfillment...

– European integration, based on the principles of cooperation, partnership and rule of law, enables people to live in safety...

– the economic and social cohesion policy, a modern expression of European solidarity, has gradually helped to improve people's standard of living...

– the people of Europe benefit from the respect for cultural and linguistic diversity and the recognition of local and regional identities.

...We consider the following areas to be priorities:

– promoting European values, including respect for human beings, their freedoms, rights and dignity; the principles of solidarity and responsibility; the rule of law and equality before the law;

– cultural diversity; the consolidation of the European social model; and the development of local and regional autonomy and civil society... These values lay the foundations for a bond of trust between the Union, its different levels of governance and its citizens, and establish the key features of a common European identity;

– completing the single market...

– democratically strengthening the political life of the Union...

– adapting the Community's remit, in areas where citizens clearly sense the added value of a European approach, in compliance with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.

– the cohesion of the European Union, to be able to meet the challenge of globalisation more successfully.

In our capacity as representatives of the level where grassroots democracy and local solidarity are put into practice... we are convinced that devolution and multi-level governance are among the best routes towards European integration.

We are ready to unite our efforts to ensure that Europe becomes a strong political entity...

To this end, we are determined to:

– continue to contribute to the development of an ever-closer union of the peoples of Europe, whilst respecting local and regional diversity, identity and autonomy

– pursue direct dialogue with our fellow citizens regarding the achievements of the European Union and the challenges to come; and affirm the role of the CoR in the EU decision-making process

– make our contribution in the form of financial and human resources in order to support EU policies in areas that are crucial to our citizens and to future generations...

– promote and share the experience we have already acquired in new forms of citizen participation, enhancing regional cultural and economic potential, managing diversity and inter-regional cooperation in the Union, at its borders and with the rest of the world

– support the heads of state and government in bringing the constitutional process and the necessary reform of the Treaties to a rapid conclusion, without losing the ground gained by and for local and regional authorities, especially with regard to monitoring of subsidiarity and territorial cohesion in the EU.

Rome, 23 March 2007

To read the Declaration in full:

www.cor.europa.eu/rome_declaration.htm
For centuries Europe has been an idea, holding out hope of peace and understanding. That hope has been fulfilled. European unification has made peace and prosperity possible. It has brought about a sense of community and overcome differences. Each Member State has helped to unite Europe and to strengthen democracy and the rule of law. Thanks to the yearning for freedom of the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe the unnatural division of Europe is now consigned to the past. European integration shows that we have learnt the painful lessons of a history marked by bloody conflict. Today we live together as was never possible before.

In the European Union, we are turning our common ideals into reality.

We are striving for peace and freedom, for democracy and the rule of law, for mutual respect and shared responsibility, for prosperity and security, for tolerance and participation, for justice and solidarity.

We preserve in the European Union the identities and diverse traditions of its Member States.

We are enriched by open borders and a lively variety of languages, cultures and regions. There are many goals which we cannot achieve on our own, but only in concert. Tasks are shared between the European Union, the Member States and their regions and local authorities.

We are facing major challenges which do not stop at national borders. The European Union is our response to these challenges. Only together can we continue to preserve our ideal of European society in future for the good of all European Union citizens. This European model combines economic success and social responsibility. The common market and the euro make us strong. We can thus shape the increasing interdependence of the global economy and ever-growing competition on international markets according to our values. Europe's wealth lies in the knowledge and ability of its people; that is the key to growth, employment and social cohesion.

We will fight terrorism, organised crime and illegal immigration together. We stand up for liberties and civil rights also in the struggle against those who oppose them.

We are committed to the peaceful resolution of conflicts in the world.

We want to drive back poverty, hunger and disease.

We want to continue to take a leading role in that fight.

We intend jointly to lead the way in energy policy and climate protection and make our contribution to averting the global threat of climate change.

With European unification a dream of earlier generations has become a reality... Today, 50 years after the signing of the Treaties of Rome, we are united in our aim of placing the European Union on a renewed common basis before the European Parliament elections in 2009.

For we know, Europe is our common future.

Berlin, 25 March 2007
Voices of
Regions & Cities

A packed house at the prestigious Auditorium Conciliazione – venue for the CoR plenary session and 50th anniversary commemorative ceremony.
The 50th anniversary of the Treaties gave the Committee of the Regions a great chance to highlight the growing role of local authorities in the European Union. The high level of the representatives of the European institutions and Member States attending the celebrations organised in Rome by the CoR made it an extraordinary event. With the added contribution by representatives of European Youth, demonstrating their active and creative participation in the integration process and a will to get their ideas across, the result was a great success.

Walter Veltroni, Mayor of Rome, Italy

“Our common future depends on the common actions, collaboration and solidarity of the cities of the EU. This solidarity will transform into our collective power and pooled influence, providing us access to the whole world. One of the key priorities of local authorities working towards achieving and maintaining sustainable development must be planned urban development. This is a crucial quality-of-life issue.”

Paolo Fontanelli, Mayor of Pisa, leader of the Italian delegation in the Committee of the Regions

“The path we must follow is that of a Europe which takes on more responsibility: in international decision-making, in social issues, issues of employment, training, the environment, energy and sustainable development, immigration and urban transport networks. In short, in all areas which affect people’s everyday lives. In all these areas, local authorities, cities and regions have a leading role to play, buttressed by those principles of diversity, solidarity and subsidiarity which can only be fully implemented by enhancing the autonomy and strengthening the role of Europe’s regions and major metropolitan areas.”

Kadir Topbas, Mayor of Istanbul, Turkey

“"Our common future depends on the common actions, collaboration and solidarity of the cities of the EU. This solidarity will transform into our collective power and pooled influence, providing us access to the whole world. One of the key priorities of local authorities working towards achieving and maintaining sustainable development must be planned urban development. This is a crucial quality-of-life issue."
The city’s duty is to make life easier for our residents, not to manage them. We must therefore offer the best possible and most efficient services for the taxpayers’ money. We share that duty with other major cities in Europe. We also share many of the same challenges – to generate economic growth for more jobs, to prevent pollution and congestion, to increase integration of immigrants and to give our children and young people the finest start in life in order to succeed in the knowledge society. We share the challenge of sustainable development.

Bo Bladholm,
Lord Mayor of Stockholm, Sweden

How far should decentralisation go? As mayor of a city at the heart of the Maas-Rhine Euregio, I can give but one answer – short and to the point: as far as possible! I back the introduction of a special statute for the Euregios, setting out their specific rights and obligations and providing a policy framework tailored to their area that reflects regional circumstances. Such a statute must also provide for a direct working relationship between the European Union and local and regional authorities, without interference from national governments. That is the only way to make a reality of the European ideal of prosperity and well-being for all.

Gerd Leers,
Mayor of Maastricht, Netherlands

Local authorities are key partners in the implementation of Community policies. Due to their experience on the ground and their innovative policies; they are also in a position to contribute to the actual formulation of these policies. They play a key role in improving the dialogue between the public and the European institutions.

Gérard Collomb,
Mayor of Lyon, France, and President of EUROCITIES
I believe that regions have a fundamental role to play in making the most of linguistic and cultural differences, which are the real competitive advantage of Europe in respect to other countries in the world.

José Montilla,
President of Catalonia, Spain

I’d like to say that the contribution of regions of Europe is vital for the future of Europe. We’ve already made a huge contribution over the past few years, regions and cities have already made a great contribution to the building of this Union that is today celebrating its 50th anniversary. This is a Union we hope to be able to deepen.

Riccardo Illy,
President of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Italy, and President of the Assembly of European Regions

Only by cooperating and working together can the regions achieve real results in European projects. Rather than regionalising Europe, we now need to focus on “Europeanising” the regions, which must make an active contribution to strengthening the European project by acting as a link with our citizens at grassroots level.

Claudio Martini,
President of Tuscany, Italy, and President of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions
The ‘new’ Europe envisioned by the Robert Schuman Declaration in 1950 was the platform for a world free of all the old constraints. It offered a coalition of not only countries, but minds with the same purpose … from European to local level, it is we, the citizens of Europe that must present a united front in order to make a positive contribution to the notion of solidarity, which is one of the cornerstones of European unity.

As a member of the CoR, representing a traditionally coal-producing region, with a large number of thermal power stations and other installations with a significant level of CO2 emissions, I believe that we, the regions and cities, must take up the challenge of implementing practical energy efficiency projects, in this way helping the EU to rely on regional players in meeting these ambitious goals. Energy efficiency is more than a simple policy instrument: it is also a challenge for the Union’s citizens. Local and regional authorities are absolutely crucial to the success of the future Community energy policy.

At a time when the world faces many challenges: climate change, international terrorism, conflicts, and globalisation, Europe needs to ensure its voice can be heard. And the rest of the world expects to hear Europe’s voice. Therefore, I disagree with those who argue that the EU does not need the new provisions in the Constitution and can continue with the arrangements in the Treaty of Nice. The EU needs to strengthen its ability to act on the global stage and the current constitutional crisis needs to be resolved soon.
Rafal Dutkiewicz,
Mayor of Wroclaw, Poland

“Poland wouldn’t achieve as much dynamic growth without the massive support of local and regional authorities. Decentralisation, in keeping with the subsidiarity rule, is the basis for an effective cohesion policy in Europe.”

Alain Rousset,
President of the Regional Council of Aquitaine, France,
and President of the Association of French Regions

“The regions of Europe hold for the most part the key to the success of the Lisbon and Göteborg strategies. These strategies are indeed at the heart of employment and innovation policies. However, there is no denying today that our regions suffer from Europe’s lack of inspiration and dynamism. It is high time to do away with the self-interests of Member States, which have once again been all the more visible in the handling of the Airbus and Galileo affairs. It is also high time for our nation states to stop dissimulating EU money by making use of it as state grants and that the role of officials and representatives elected at the local and regional levels gains recognition so as to really involve Europe in ‘street-level’ politics.”

Manuel Chavez Gonzalez,
President of the Regional Government of Andalusia,
Spain

“The European Union and singularly one of its more accomplished expressions, the policy of cohesion, do not have another objective than to improve our citizens’ life. The latter constitutes an essential reference axis for the policies of the EU. And it is because these policies combine the economic growth, territorial balance, social cohesion and the improvement of the living conditions of the men and women who live in the EU. If we, the regions of Europe, would like to contribute to this phenomenal project which celebrates its 50 years now, we should not fail. We have the responsibility to provide a new momentum so that in 50 years, Europeans can celebrate the first century of the United Europe.”
CoR President Michel Delebarre chairs a round table debate with Germany’s Minister of State for Europe, Günter Gloser, President of Lazio Piero Marrazzo, CoR First Vice-President Luc Van den Brande, and the Presidents of the CoR’s four political groups.
European regions and cities have been given great opportunities thanks to Europe's cohesion and solidarity in the last decades; they are ready now to contribute to the development of Europe by delivering growth and jobs. Europe has given us a better future and we say yes – as representatives of the regional and local authorities closest to citizens – to a stronger Union based on the principle of subsidiarity.

Luc Van den Brande,
First Vice-President of the Committee of the Regions and member of the Flemish Parliament, Belgium

“The challenge for the European Union is: further integration in combination with more decentralisation, more regions’, more cities’ and communes’ involvement. Multilevel governance will become a crucial tool for managing this combination while at the same time guaranteeing continuity for the integration process. We need a different political structure to the one developed during industrial times characterised by centralisation and equalization. Citizens of today are part of their neighbourhoods, their districts and feel at home in their communes. These levels should be taken into account when managing the European Union to give it and its citizens weight in the world.”

Isidoro Gottardo,
President of the European People’s Party group in the Committee of the Regions and member of the Regional Assembly of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Italy

“European regions and cities have been given great opportunities thanks to Europe’s cohesion and solidarity in the last decades; they are ready now to contribute to the development of Europe by delivering growth and jobs. Europe has given us a better future and we say yes – as representatives of the regional and local authorities closest to citizens – to a stronger Union based on the principle of subsidiarity.”
Mercedes Bresso, President of the Party of European Socialists group in the Committee of the Regions and President of Piedmont, Italy

“We must look to the future and, with the contribution of the local and regional authorities, find new ways of addressing the most serious of problems of the day, such as climate change, the fight against inequalities, population change, and the challenge of economic globalisation. As the CoR rapporteur on the European Union’s communication policy, I also believe it is worthwhile stressing the importance of continuing to explain and communicate the bigger picture of the integration process to the European people, in particular the young people who have been involved in the Committee’s work and in the celebrations for the European Union’s first 50 years of life.”

Ivo Opstelten, President of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe group in the Committee of the Regions and Mayor of Rotterdam, Netherlands

“In the 20th century the EU was a guarantee of peace, democracy and prosperity. These objectives are still essential, but in the 21st century the concerns of citizens have evolved. The EU needs to explain why it is still necessary in this century and it must do it in a simple way. A one-page Mission Statement would achieve this.”

Maria Corrigan, President of the Union for Europe of the Nations-European Alliance group in the Committee of the Regions and member of Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown County Council, Ireland

“Young people are the key to our future: we as members of local and regional authorities need to engage with youth to ensure that their views and opinions are communicated to ensure a stronger European Union in 50 years’ time.”
The Presidency’s Pledge

Berlin | 25. März 2007

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Angela Merkel signs the Berlin Declaration with Hans-Gert Pöttering and José Manuel Barroso
As President-in-Office of the European Council, I am pleased that the Committee of the Regions is stating its commitment to direct dialogue with the European public about the achievements of the European Union. This dialogue about Europe is also high on the German Council Presidency’s agenda.

In the Berlin Declaration, three EU institutions – the Council, the Parliament and the Commission – paid tribute to the values underlying European unification, for which the Committee of the Regions also expresses support in its declaration.

The Berlin Declaration also highlights the cultural diversity that enriches Europe, and the significance of regional and local authorities:

"We preserve in the European Union the identities and diverse traditions of its Member States. We are enriched by open borders and a lively variety of languages, cultures and regions. There are many goals which we cannot achieve on our own, but only in concert. Tasks are shared between the European Union, the Member States and their regions and local authorities."

It is encouraging that the Committee of the Regions has declared its support for a rapid conclusion to the constitutional process.

The German EU Council Presidency will continue to campaign for the substance of the Constitutional Treaty – and thus the explicit recognition of local and regional autonomy and the strengthening of the subsidiarity principle – to be maintained.

Angela Merkel,
Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany
The Santa Cecilia choir performing 'Ode to Joy', the anthem of the European Union
CoR President Michel Delebarre presents the assembly's Declaration for Europe to Günter Gloser, Germany's Minister of State for Europe