

Conference for EU-related Affairs (CARUE)

Political priorities of the CARUE delegation for 2023

THE CONFERENCE FOR EU-RELATED AFFAIRS,

Having regard to:

- the State of the Union address given by the president of the European Commission on 14 September,
- the speech given by the president of the European Committee of the Regions on 29 June,
- the EU Annual Report on the State of Regions and Cities,
- the European Commission's Work Programme for 2023,
- the CoR Resolution on its priorities for 2020-2025,
- the CoR Resolution on its proposals in view of the European Commission's Work Programme for 2023,
- the agreement of the meeting of the Conference for EU-related Affairs (CARUE) of 29 July 2022,
- the agreement of the Spanish delegation at the CoR of 11 October 2022 to draw up a document setting out priorities,
- the agreement of the Spanish delegation at the CoR of 8 February on the Spanish delegation's document setting out priorities for 2023,
- the agreement of the CARUE Working Group for the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the EU of 21 March 2023 on taking into account the document setting out priorities of the Spanish delegation at the CoR,

undertakes to:

promote the involvement of Spanish local and regional authorities in the CoR's work on European policies within its remit and/or of interest to it:

AREAS OF INTEREST

1. undertakes to work in all areas that contribute to the interests of Spanish regions and municipalities, especially all those relating to green, digital, demographic, social and cohesion policies;

COMMITMENTS

2. stresses its commitment to the European Green Deal and the achievement of a green and just transition that ensures that no person or area is left behind; noting the key role played by local and regional authorities in meeting climate and environmental objectives, calls for more concerted multilevel action and for subnational authorities to be involved in climate governance and in implementing the Paris Agreement, and calls on the EU to step up its work on the consequences of climate change such as drought, floods and other natural disasters;

SECTORS:

CONNECTIVITY, TRANSPORT, ENERGY AND DIGITAL SERVICES

3. points out that connectivity in transport, energy and digital services is essential to ensure the development of the single market, especially in archipelagos and in the outermost regions and in autonomous cities without a territorial link with mainland Europe, and therefore:
 - a. stresses the importance of ensuring that all areas have modern, efficient, climate-neutral and sustainable transport connections so that all regions can develop at the same speed; stresses the social role played by ports and airports in areas where there is no alternative for their citizens;

- b. points to the importance of the revision of the TEN-T Regulation, which will shape European transport policy for the next ten years, as well as to the need to ensure that the TEN-T is competitive, effective and inclusive for all areas, with particular regard to rail corridors and the necessary connections with ports;
- c. stresses the importance of stimulating the Atlantic and Mediterranean corridors and making them a strategic priority axis for European transport, in order to avoid the Iberian peninsula being isolated and to improve connections for European citizens. The high-speed train connecting the Atlantic and Mediterranean regions with Europe will increase their development, competitiveness and presence in Europe;
- d. points out that the energy transition also requires the deployment of interregional and international energy infrastructure, to enable renewable energy to be harnessed wherever the resource lies and for any European consumer to have access to it;
- e. emphasises that the digital transition will only be a success if all territories and people can participate in it, and stresses the need to ensure that digital infrastructure reaches all regions and municipalities and that everyone has the necessary digital skills;

AGRICULTURE AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHALLENGE

- 4. promotes the transition to more socially, economically and environmentally efficient agricultural production systems capable of securing our food sufficiency and farmers' incomes; highlights the importance of the Long-Term Rural Vision as the backbone of subnational areas and stresses the need for economic development measures that stabilise population levels and ensure the sustainability of rural areas;
- 5. considers that the problems that exist in areas facing demographic and depopulation challenges cannot be tackled effectively from a purely sectoral point of view. This requires a multi-level, multisectoral and cross-cutting approach to ensure connectivity and basic public services adapted to the needs of their population, enabling equal opportunities for their inhabitants, and economic and social cohesion in rural areas. It points to the common need of the European Parliament and the European Committee of the Regions for the European Commission to adopt a European strategy on demographic change that coordinates EU action in a number of areas, involves the whole of society and gives due consideration to the role of local and regional authorities;

FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE

- 6. calls for the development of the fisheries and maritime sector in the context of the blue economy with the help of European funds and stresses the key role

of the regions in the development of European aquaculture;

TOURISM

7. encourages the transition to a sustainable and resilient tourism model from a local and regional perspective, in the framework of a future European Tourism Agenda 2030-2050;

CROSS-CUTTING: COHESION AND SIMPLIFICATION

8. emphasises the central role that cohesion policy has played in the development of regions and municipalities and in the development of the European Union as a whole; undertakes to work in the Cohesion Alliance to ensure that the future multiannual financial framework provides for a strong, improved cohesion policy that remains at the centre of Europe and provides the right instruments for regional development, as well as a just energy transition for transition industries. It firmly supports the call for enhanced land and maritime cross-border cooperation as an essential element of European policies; It firmly supports the call for enhanced land and maritime cross-border cooperation as an essential element of European policies;
9. notes that this policy has proved a useful tool for providing an immediate response to recent crises, thanks, among other things, to the agility and effectiveness of the principle of partnership and multilevel governance and the existence of a specialised ecosystem of European fund managers based on the ground. It points out, however, that cohesion policy must pursue its own ambitious long-term objectives of strengthening the economic, social and territorial cohesion of the European Union. To this end, it calls for other European policies to incorporate the "do not harm to cohesion" principle;
10. considers that there is a need for simplification in the management and oversight of cohesion policy and NGEU funds and therefore proposes that administrative burdens be identified by the Commission and the Member States, taking into account the distinctive characteristics and objectives of the regions when determining aid. It highlights the particular situations of the outermost regions and areas with natural handicaps and/or demographic challenges, and calls for exceptions to be made from certain obligations which, in most cases, can only be effectively discharged by beneficiaries with greater budget, equipment and population. To this end, it considers it important to ensure that the administrative capacity for managing European funds in the Member States and their regions is being properly consolidated at all times;

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL

11. undertakes to continue working on the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights and on a Union of Equality, implementing measures that help to create a fairer, more social and more inclusive Europe that ensures equal opportunities for all;
12. calls for local and regional governments to be recognised as strategic partners in implementing and monitoring the EU Gender Equality Strategy, and stresses the need to include the gender dimension when implementing and developing European policies at local and regional level.
13. welcomes the fact that 2022 was the European Year of Youth in recognition of young people's key role in society and in building the future of Europe; calls for the results of the European Year to continue beyond 2022 and for work to continue on strengthening the participation of young people in democratic life and in formulating policies that address the specific challenges they face, in order to ensure that all young people have the necessary resources to participate in society;
14. welcomes the opportunity that declaring 2023 the European Year of Skills provides in order to give fresh impetus to training as a key tool for producing professionals who are more qualified and better skilled to cope with changes in the labour market; hopes that the results of this initiative will contribute to sustainable growth, greater innovation and more competitive European businesses, so that the full potential of the green and digital transition can be harnessed in an inclusive, equitable and socially just manner;

DIPLOMACY

15. stresses the value of language as a tool of cultural diplomacy and as a driver for economic growth in our relations with Latin America and the other Spanish-speaking countries; undertakes to uphold the value of Spanish as a working language in the European institutions and to promote its other languages;
16. highlights the commitment of the European Committee of the Regions to Ukrainian municipalities and regions working to alleviate the consequences of the war and facilitating the reception of Ukrainian people who have to leave their country; supports the provision of aid both to economic sectors and to European citizens who are suffering the consequences of the war;
17. points to the role of the European Union as a global player and its

contribution to prosperity and peace across the globe, and undertakes to work with the European Committee of the Regions, the other European institutions and other international actors to strengthen the European Union's ties with the rest of the world, especially those areas that are particularly close to our regions and municipalities because of historical, cultural and geographical links, such as Latin America, the Mediterranean, and Atlantic countries;

Promote the collaboration of the Committee of the Regions' Spanish local and regional authorities with the Spanish presidency:

18. urges the European Committee of the Regions and the Spanish presidency to take into account the recommendations contained in this resolution on the political priorities of the Spanish delegation at the Committee in 2023;
19. welcomes the fact that the Spanish presidency will take place in the second half of 2023, and is committed to working closely with the presidency, the European Committee of the Regions and all stakeholders to promote the involvement of local and regional authorities in the presidency's programme with the Committee;
20. urges the European institutions and, in particular the Spanish presidency, to recognise the importance of the role played by regional and local governments in designing, implementing and monitoring European policies, with the support of the Spanish members of the Committee of the Regions, external action teams and the offices of the regional representations to the EU. It calls on the successive presidencies to include the regional and local dimension in the scope of the legislative and non-legislative measures included in the presidency programme;
21. calls on the Spanish presidency to promote a subnational vision in European policies that pays particular attention to rural areas, areas affected by the industrial transition, outermost regions, and regions which suffer from severe and permanent natural or demographic handicaps; in the case of islands, encourages the adoption of an islands pact as a first step towards the adoption of an EU islands agenda;
22. calls on the Spanish presidency to give visibility to the participation of the Autonomous Communities in the Councils that are open to participation, especially in informal Councils and delegates' meetings held in Spain during the six-month presidency;

23. calls on the presidencies to include hearings of CoR rapporteurs in the agenda of the relevant working groups of the Council of the EU, in order to present the opinions adopted by the plenary sessions on the topics under discussion in these working groups, in particular where the opinions have been drafted in response to referrals from the presidencies themselves;
24. proposes that the presidency work together with the European Committee of the Regions in analysing its priorities through discussions at the meetings of the European Committee of the Regions' commissions;
25. stresses the commitment of the CARUE to maintaining ongoing dialogue between the Autonomous Communities and the General State Administration with a view to involving the Autonomous Communities in the process of organising and implementing the presidency. To this end, the CoR's Spanish delegation makes this document setting out priorities available to the CARUE Working Group.