



**European Committee
of the Regions**

RESOL-VII/019

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RESOLUTION

**on the contribution of the local and regional authorities
to the Conference on the Future of Europe**

**Resolution of the European Committee of the Regions on the
contribution of local and regional authorities to the Conference on the Future of Europe**

THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS (CoR),

Having regard to:

- the Resolution on the European Committee of the Regions' priorities for 2020-2025¹,
- the Resolutions of the European Committee of the Regions on the Conference on the Future of Europe of 12 February 2020² and of 7 May 2021³,
- the Resolution of the European Committee of the Regions on the 2022 Work Programme of the European Commission of 2 December 2021⁴,
- the report of the European Committee of the Regions' High Level Group on European Democracy;

Whereas:

- a. The EU consists of 27 Member States, 280 regions and almost 90 000 municipalities, the principle of united in diversity must be a guiding one in the functioning of the EU;
- b. citizens and their regional and local delegates to the Conference on the Future of Europe expect tangible outcomes that improve the functioning of the EU institutions and lead to reformed EU governance focusing on proximity and participation, in order to increase people's trust in the EU and its democratic legitimacy;
- c. the inclusion of a strong delegation of regional and local political representatives in the Conference Plenary helped to bring the debates close to the concerns of citizens, with the aim of providing a territorial dimension to the future outcomes of the Conference;
- d. the key proposals raised by the local and regional delegates to the Conference have met general consent in the Conference Plenary, Working Groups, the caucuses of the political families, and the Multilingual Digital Platform;

European democracy

1. believes that democracy is a fundamental value of the EU underpinned by the rule of law and expressed by citizens' trust in European, national, regional and local elections; considers that European, national, local and regional democracies, built on their regional parliaments and governments, councils and mayors legitimised by elections are fully complementary and mutually reinforcing and that democracy should be respected as a universal value across the EU;

¹ COR-2020-01392-00-00-RES-TRA

² COR-2020-00192-00-00-RES-TRA

³ COR-2021-01674-00-00-RES-TRA

⁴ COR-2021-05507-00-00-RES-TRA

2. considers that in order to address citizens' increasing demand for tackling democratic deficit, the EU needs to promote a model of "House of European Democracy " constructed on a three-dimensional legitimacy - European, national, regional and local corresponding to the vote cast by citizens at each level; regional parliaments with legislative powers will have a particular role to play here, due to their function as intermediaries between the citizens and the supranational level;
3. is convinced that representative and participative European democracy should work in a complementary manner to ensure that democracy delivers results to citizens in the places they live in;
4. points out that democracy is geared towards the participation of all people and that, in Europe, legitimacy arises primarily from people's lived experience of subsidiarity; therefore sees a good future for a citizens' Europe; in this context the active involvement of local and regional representatives at European level will be particularly important;
5. stresses the need for greater participation and engagement of citizens in EU policies through stronger electoral representation at all levels of governance, and considers that this will contribute to the Europeanisation of the public space; calls on the European Parliament, the Commission and the Council to boost representative democracy by increasing the funding available to political parties, groups and foundations present at EU level, including those representing the national, regional and local level;
6. believes that there is scope for better use of the existing Treaty framework via better synergies between the various levels of governance; however, Treaty changes should not be excluded if duly justified;
7. calls for building on the experience of the Conference to develop permanent and place-based dialogue with citizens as a participatory mechanism that would better link the EU with the realities at local, county, regional and national levels; believes that this permanent dialogue with citizens would prove its added value in the context of European, national and regional / county / local elections; in this regard, the work of the centres that form part of the Europe Direct network is noteworthy, as is that of the host structures which act as drivers for the dissemination of European values and the debate on the European project. In the same vein, local and regional authorities should encourage permanent forums for European dialogue and debate with the various actors in their region, with a view to bringing the European integration project closer to the citizens;
8. calls for new forms of civic participation to be institutionalised at European Union level by means of citizens' dialogues with randomly selected citizens on specific topics;
9. highlights that EU regions, counties and cities have tangible know-how related to citizens' participation and recalls that they have organised the majority of the nearly 5000 citizens' dialogues and events held in the context of the Conference; reiterates its readiness to continue to organise local dialogues aimed at narrowing the gap between European institutions and citizens through engagement at local, county and regional level;

Active subsidiarity and proportionality in the European decision making process

10. recommends that the principles of multi-level governance and partnership be expanded and incorporated into the legislative and regulatory provisions of all EU policies that have a regional or local impact; reiterates its call for the codification of the principles of multi-level governance and partnership beyond the ESIF in an inter-institutional Code of Conduct, and for their inclusion in the Inter-Institutional Agreement on Better Law-Making;
11. stresses that the European Missions, as a new and vital instrument in tackling burning societal challenges, are a real test of the EU's impact and credibility. They need to have widespread legitimacy and acceptance. As the European Commission has highlighted, the role of cities and regions with all their stakeholders and citizens is crucial in achieving the ambitious targets of the EU Missions. Also calls on the EU Missions to define clear roadmaps and create a systemic new multi-governance approach and methodologies on experimenting, prototyping, monitoring, and scaling up the activities on all governance levels;
12. calls for strengthening the principle of active subsidiarity through amendments to Protocol 2 of the Lisbon Treaty on the application of the subsidiarity and proportionality principles; demands that such amendments extend the deadline for scrutinising subsidiarity under the "Early Warning Mechanism" to twelve weeks, introduce a systematic use of the subsidiarity "grid" developed by the CoR and introduce a "green card procedure", allowing for a significant number of national or regional parliaments to propose EU legislation;
13. proposes that impact assessments include a territorial dimension, and that the principle of proportionality gets the same legal consideration as the principle of subsidiarity;
14. calls to for the CoR to be gradually upgraded from an advisory body to a co-deciding body of the European Union on key policies areas with territorial impact;
15. The importance of the initiatives launched by the European Committee of the Regions with regard to subsidiarity and the improvement of European legislation must be highlighted; not just the subsidiarity network but also RegHub, which is playing an increasingly larger role and is proving to be very useful to the European Commission;
16. points out that the CoR represents a dimension of European policy that other EU bodies cannot, and that the CoR's regional and local perspective therefore makes an indispensable contribution to policy-making and legitimacy within the European Union;
17. considers it essential that the CoR should focus its work on policies with territorial impact, and therefore predominantly on matters in which local and regional authorities are either involved at implementing level or are significantly affected;
18. calls for a mandate for the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Council of the EU to discuss CoR opinions adopted after a mandatory consultation, and to give substantiated reasons if those opinions are not taken into account;

19. requests that the CoR should be granted access to trilogues and related documents, provided that it has delivered an opinion on the proposal in question under Article 307 TFEU; demands that the CoR is given the ability to propose compromises to the co-legislators, which will enable them to receive valuable input regarding the implementation realities on the ground;
20. calls for better inter-institutional synergies, for instance by involving the CoR in the work of the structures of the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union (e.g. commissions, committees and working groups) and the comitology procedure;
21. recalls that 70 % of legislation is implemented at regional and local level, asks to be consulted in the EU's annual and multi-annual planning, agenda and priority-setting processes, such as those foreseen under the Inter-Institutional Agreement on Better Law-Making; in this connection, highlights the added value of the RegHub network and calls for it to be strengthened;
22. is convinced that giving greater consideration to the specific experiences of local and regional authorities in the implementation of EU law will lead to better regulation in the European Union;
23. stresses that any evolution of the European electoral law, including the possible introduction of transnational lists, must respect the principle of territorial representation and ensure the connection to the local and regional dimensions of EU policies, and the proximity of the Members of the European Parliament to citizens;

European values and the rule of law

24. points out that local and regional authorities have an important role to play in strengthening the rule of law, condemns therefore any attempts to attack the rule of law, instrumentalise the judicial system and undermine European values, rights and the supremacy of EU law over national law; underlines that local and regional authorities must be involved in monitoring the rule of law and assessing it based on the criteria developed by the Venice Commission;
25. reiterates its call for steps to be taken to strengthen the EU's and Members States' authority, the credibility of public rule of law institutions, and regional authorities as incubators of democracy;
26. considers that breaches of the rule of law principle must result in suspension of payments or financial corrections, and that in the event of such measures, those beneficiaries of EU funding including local and regional authorities, not responsible for the breaches of the rule of law should continue to receive financial support from the Member State concerned;
27. recognises that the COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated existing disparities in the European regions; calls therefore on the Conference's components to reinforce European solidarity and recognise cohesion as a fundamental European value;

28. proposes the establishment of an Erasmus programme for local and regional politicians to help develop their knowledge of the EU, increase fund delivery and improve the quality of policy implementation;

Youth, education and culture

29. points out that the Conference on the Future of Europe should be used to spearhead efforts to achieve the Union of Equality, effectively addressing all forms of discrimination; considers it essential to better ensure that gender equality principles are mainstreamed throughout EU legislation and "gender-impact assessments" are introduced for each newly proposed piece of EU legislation;
30. considers that the Conference on the Future of Europe should make proposals for the sustainable protection and promotion of minorities in the EU, building on the proposals of the successful Minority SafePack Citizens' Initiative;
31. underlines the need to address the threats of disinformation in Europe and calls for the introduction of a Europe-wide curriculum for civic education, the promotion of European democratic values, critical thinking, digital skills and media literacy, to be developed and deployed in partnership with local and regional authorities;
32. calls for strong action at EU level to reduce regional disparities in education, particularly in remote, cross-border, rural and poor urban areas; demands that the EU support national and regional efforts to future-proof education through the development of new teaching tools such as Pan-European multilingual digital platforms for the broad dissemination of educational content;
33. highlights the importance of continuing to expand the recipients, opportunities and funds of the Erasmus+ programme, which is the most important instrument the European Union relies on to create a shared European awareness. In particular, the current resources and opportunities it offers at school level should be given a boost, as should those allocated to the various fields of public administration so that, in this case, it becomes a programme for the exchange of best practices, broadening the scope of the current Erasmus for Public Administrations programme;
34. considers that tackling youth unemployment and youth and child poverty should become a priority in all European regions, cities and rural areas;
35. considers that universal access to culture and sport activities is the key to enabling economic and social development and increasing the overall number of people, especially young people, involved in such activities, thereby facilitating the promotion of common European values;

Climate, Environment and Resilience

36. recalls that regions and cities play a decisive role in implementing most mitigation and adaptation actions, in responding to climate disasters and in ensuring the active engagement of local communities in the green transition; demands, therefore, a clear institutional involvement

of local and regional authorities in the design and implementation of climate, energy and environmental policies, for direct access to EU funding, the minimisation of bureaucratic obstacles, and for coordinated programmes across all levels of governance and, in particular, the investment plans in support of the European Green Deal and the Recovery and Resilience Plans; underlines that direct funding is the precondition for cities and regions to be ready to uptake the ambitious targets being negotiated under the Fit for 55 package;

37. highlights the territorial dimension of the European Green Deal and the interaction with the digital transformation and social policies; demands that the monitoring of the climate measures in the recovery and resilience plans takes into account the Local Green Deals; proposes a European Regional Scoreboard with clear, targeted, user-friendly indicators to measure and monitor the impacts of the European Green Deal at the level of NUTS 2 regions;
38. reiterates its demands for a systematic organisation of multilevel platforms and dialogues to deliver structured and inclusive participation of local and regional authorities in planning and implementing Green Deal initiatives, that will also contribute to resilient local communities; emphasises that the success of the Green Deal requires a rapid transformation process towards renewable energy systems, their technologies and the adaptation of the associated infrastructure;
39. underlines the growing role of local and regional authorities at global and European level for ensuring a just climate transition; notes that the Paris Agreement and the Edinburgh Declaration on the post 2020 global biodiversity framework recognise the relevance of multilevel governance to deliver climate neutrality, biodiversity and sustainable development in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals; reiterates its support for a system of Regionally and Locally Determined Contributions (RLDCs) to formally acknowledge, monitor and encourage the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions;
40. recommends paying attention to the sustainable transformation of the transport sector that must be a just and fair one, making sure that no region is left behind and that sustainable and alternatively fuelled mobility is affordable and accessible for all citizens in all regions; proposes a Just Transition Mechanism for regions depending on the automotive industry in order to manage the changes in the sector, considering that the automotive sector (which provides direct and indirect jobs to 13.8 million Europeans, representing 6.1% of total EU employment) is undergoing a fundamental transformation process on the way towards zero emission vehicles, with huge impacts on regional growth and jobs;

Health Union

41. reiterates its commitment to work towards the creation of a fully-fledged European Health Union that respects the principle of subsidiarity and the legal competences in health; calls for a clearer role for the regional authorities, in particular regions with legislative powers in the field of health, and for local authorities, in the future EU Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority, alongside national authorities and EU institutions;
42. supports access to eHealth for all EU citizens; calls for a deepening of EU competences in the field of health, including through Treaty changes, particularly to enable the Commission to

formally recognise a public health emergency at Union level; supports the call for strengthening health protection, EU manufacturing capabilities and increasing cooperation in the field of medicines;

43. encourages the development of cross-border healthcare cooperation, including long term EU funding and allowing the free passage across borders of personnel and vehicles working in the emergency services and healthcare. Bureaucratic obstacles still impeding cross-border healthcare and emergency services should be removed quickly and without red tape, in the interests of citizens;

Economy, social justice and jobs

44. is convinced that the Conference on the Future of Europe provides genuine momentum for the European pillar of social rights to become the new social rulebook, facilitating the transition to a sustainable economy and access to jobs, while enhancing social cohesion;
45. calls for an overhaul of European economic governance, which must better support quality, public, long-term and sustainable investment at all levels of government through reviewed budgetary rules, and improve democratic accountability and efficiency through the better involvement of local and regional authorities in the European Semester via a partnership-based Code of Conduct. Reiterates its position in favour of abandoning unanimous decision-making in taxation, in order to allow the European Union to take the necessary decisions by qualified majority, as in other areas of action;
46. calls for use of funding available for recovery, and for the green and digital transitions to facilitate labour market transition, reskilling and upskilling, while ensuring the same level of protection for people working for digital platforms or the gig economy as for those working in the offline economy;
47. underlines to role of innovation in developing a stronger economy and ensuring both competitive and sustainable growth; is of the opinion that European innovation requires investment in the necessary capabilities (research infrastructures, broadband networks, supercomputing, Artificial Intelligence and open data sets) and needs to attract scholars and specialists in all European territories;

Digital transformation

48. considers that digital transformation will need to ensure the full exploitation of technology, to the benefit of all sectors of society, within an ethical framework respectful of the rights of the citizens, especially in the use of disruptive technologies, and in particular artificial intelligence, while closing the digital divide and making sure digital literacy and connectivity become a reality in all parts of Europe;
49. emphasises the need for data security, interoperability and storage and looks forward to the European Commission's proposal for a European cyber security resilience Act; believes that in order to ensure access to digital services and information, including the efficient provision of

public services, it is necessary to invest in secure, high-capacity infrastructure to provide Internet access to both individuals and organisations;

50. points out that digital transformation is dependent on a long-term vision for education, research and exchange in digital issues, where the EU must be an innovator and leader in discovering new digital technologies, services and must set appropriate and coherent digital standards;
51. considers therefore that the discussion on the future of Europe needs to include "digital cohesion" as an important additional dimension of the traditional concept of economic, social and territorial cohesion defined in the EU Treaty;
52. calls for immediate action to address the digital divides among the EU Member States and between urban and rural areas when it comes to connectivity and digital infrastructure, digital skills, access and use of e-government services; calls therefore for the introduction of a "Digital EU Cross-border Service Card" to simplify access to public and emergency services for citizens and businesses in cross-border regions;

Migration

53. calls for a European approach when addressing the root causes of migration as a phenomenon driven by global instability and conflicts, state fragility and climate migration; urges effective capacity building to enhance the efficient and effective management of migration by all levels of governance;
54. notes the recognition by citizens and delegates of the pivotal role local and regional authorities play in the integration and inclusion of migrants and refugees in particularly affected areas; calls therefore for the inclusion of local and regional authorities in the design of integration policies; requests the elaboration of a more flexible policy toolbox allowing subnational authorities to steer integration and to measure the success of integration and inclusion policies at regional and local level; and calls for the great potential of voluntary solidarity in our municipalities and regions to be harnessed in a voluntary reception capacity concept, integrated into a comprehensive and long-term policy on migration;
55. recommends establishing methodologies for replicating sustainable reception and integration models, such as community sponsorship;

Conference on the Future of Europe's outputs and follow up

sees the Conference on the Future of Europe as a starting point for a fully empowering democratic process at European, national, regional and local level; reiterates the need for a continuous, genuinely inclusive, transparent, decentralised, geographically and politically balanced debate on the future of the European Union; considers that the Conference should follow an open-ended approach, including with regard to reforming policies and institutions, and that it should pave the way for lasting reforms, going beyond the duration of the Conference;

56. reaffirms its full commitment to contributing to the Conference's follow-up, by turning political initiatives and proposals into actions which meet citizens' expectations; points out that the Conference's success also depends on citizens' recommendations ultimately being reflected in concrete results. If their recommendations are not adopted, or are adopted in modified form, the reasons should be set out clearly and transparently;
57. underlines that when initiating follow-up actions, such as new legislative proposals for the implementation of the Conference results, the division of competences and in particular the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality enshrined in the Treaties need to be observed;
58. instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Conference on the Future of Europe chairmanship, as well as the European Parliament, the French, Czech and Swedish Presidencies of the Council of the EU and the President of the European Council and the European Commission;
59. is in favour of making full use of the initially planned two-year duration of the Conference, starting on 9 May 2021, to allow for appropriate and comprehensive discussion of citizens' ideas and proposals. Only an interim report should be published in spring 2022.

Brussels, 27 January 2022

The President
of the European Committee of the Regions

Apostolos Tzitzikostas