



**European Committee
of the Regions**

Declaration of the delegation of the European Committee of the Regions and of local and regional representatives to the Conference on the Future of Europe

Since the adoption of the conclusions of the Conference on the Future of Europe, the European Committee of the Regions and European associations of local and regional authorities have set initiatives in motion and implemented policies with a specific territorial impact in order to deliver concretely on the recommendations of the Conference, as highlighted in the latest report of the European Committee of the Regions.

Examples are numerous:

- developing programmes for greener cities and regions such as the [Green Deal Going Local](#) initiative and reducing energy consumption and dependency with the [Cities Energy Saving Sprint](#) but also by making public transport more attractive and affordable notably in rural and islands regions (recommendations 3.1& 3.3);
- ensuring the full implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights at all levels (recommendation 14.1);
- supporting cross border access to healthcare (recommendation 10.4);
- enhancing cohesion notably by investing in internet connectivity in rural areas to reduce the digital divide (recommendation 12.14) as well as promoting multilingualism and regional languages (recommendation 48.2);
- strengthening democracy with the [network of EU councillors](#) (recommendation 36.6) but also by supporting meaningful youth participation (recommendation 6.3), bringing the EU closer to citizens;
- launching the [European Alliance of Cities and Regions for the Reconstruction of Ukraine](#), which contributes to an EU as a strong actor on the world scene supporting reconstruction and recovery of Ukraine (recommendation 24).

Across all policy fields, regions and cities are making a difference.

Achieving progress and delivering change rely on the closeness of regions and cities to citizens and their strong commitment to European values of democracy, equality, freedom and rule of law. Therefore, European democracy needs to be organised based on the three-dimensional democracy model that involves, with a meaningful, effective and legitimate contribution of the local and regional levels in cooperation with the national and European levels, in full respect of the principle of subsidiarity and proportionality.

This is why, building on the mandate of the Conference, the European Committee of the Regions adopted a [resolution](#) in June 2022 calling for:

- Anchoring European democracy at local and regional level and bridging with functioning participatory democracy;
- Increasing EU delivery capacity through active subsidiarity and the principle of multilevel governance;
- Reinforcing the territorial dimension of EU policies in achieving the overall cohesion objectives.

As some of the proposals of the Conference on the Future of Europe may require change to the Union's constitutional framework, it will be essential that local and regional authorities are fully involved in the negotiation process in order to reinforce the territorial dimension of European democracy, which should not be limited to the national and European levels only.

At the same time, the Committee of the Regions remains convinced that appropriate feedback to and communication with the 800 citizens who participated in the Conference is of paramount importance for continuing to build on the good will and trust between all actors and partners, which was inherent throughout the works of the Conference.

Remaining committed to the objectives and spirit of the Conference, and in the framework of the Feedback Event, organised by the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Council on 2nd December 2022, the delegation of the European Committee of the Regions and of local and regional representatives to the Conference on the Future of Europe declares that:

- Local and regional authorities should be fully associated to any initiative or policy proposal put forward by the European Commission, the European Parliament and/or the Council in view of implementing the conclusions of the Conference. This will also mirror the trust of EU citizens in the regional and local politicians;
- A territorial anchoring should be ensured in the development and implementation of the new European citizens' panels as part of the EU policy-making, building on the experience of the Conference but also relying on successful methodologies and practices of citizens' participation already experienced in the EU's regions and cities.
- Any reform of the EU's functioning should contribute to an enhanced role of the European Committee of the Regions and increased recognition of the contribution of local and regional actors in the EU's democratic life. In the context of such institutional reforms, the European Committee of the Regions should become a main counterpart of the EU institutions on matters with a territorial impact. This will entail enlarging the number of policy areas for which its consultation becomes mandatory to encompass all policies with territorial relevance (this implies a review of Articles 43 (CAP/fisheries), 79 (migration) and 114 TFEU (single market general clause), as well as a review of Articles 13 TEU and 294, 300 and 307 TFEU). In the areas of mandatory consultation, the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Council of the EU should provide substantiated reasons if the European Committee of the Regions opinions are not taken into account. The Committee of the Regions should also be better engaged in the co-decision trilogues.

In view of the next European elections in 2024 and beyond, the European Committee of the Regions will contribute to a vibrant civic space, rooted in all Europe's regions and cities, by mobilising local and regional representatives for the European public debate, participating in the setting-up of a permanent dialogue with citizens and co-writing the next chapter of European democracy.

We stand ready, through mayors and regional leaders, to help the EU institutions to make the voice of the Conference heard on the ground, in order to maximise the citizens' effort for strengthening European democracy: this is urgently needed.