



**"Building the EU from the ground up with our regions and cities"**

Bucharest Declaration  
European Committee of the Regions  
8th European Summit of Regions and Cities 14-15 March 2019

The European Union, built on the principles of liberty, solidarity, democracy and respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, has brought lasting peace and development to the people of Europe.

Europe is being transformed at an unprecedented speed by globalisation, by the digital revolution, climate, and demographic change. If we do not want European integration to become a reversible process, these transformations, which crystalize social, economic and territorial inequalities, have to be accompanied, shaped and regulated through a concentrated effort at all levels of government, in particular when one third of all public expenditure and more than half of public investment is carried out at the sub-national level.

Furthermore, trust in local and regional levels of governance is on average higher than trust in national government, and in most Member States it is also higher than trust in the EU. Against this background, the EU's cities and regions, and their elected representatives, provide proximity, trust and stability in the Union at a time when divergences and antagonisms are growing. This stability is vital to continue building a shared European future for the next generation.

We, European Union politicians elected at regional and local level, are convinced that the European Union needs its regions and cities as much as they need the European Union.

This declaration is our contribution to the preparation of the Strategic Agenda 2019-2024 to be outlined by the EU leaders in Sibiu on 9 May 2019.

**Strengthening the democratic foundation of the European Union**

1. Local and regional democracy is an essential part of EU democracy. Multilevel governance is essential to ensure the active and equal participation of all levels of government in a spirit of trust. This loyal cooperation between all levels is essential for the EU to be able to deliver on its objective of economic and social progress for its citizens wherever they live, and in a fully accountable, efficient and transparent way;
2. Applying the concept of "active subsidiarity" is crucial to allow decisions to reflect European added value and to be taken as close to citizens as possible in a fully accountable, efficient and transparent way;



3. While respecting national frameworks, more decentralisation and a better division of powers are essential elements of good governance because they increase transparency, accountability and quality of policy-making with a better engagement with citizens;
4. The link between the Union and its citizens should be reinforced. We support the demand for more channels of democratic participation. We actively support the launch of an EU permanent system of citizen's consultations;
5. It is vital to raise awareness amongst EU citizens, especially young people, about the European dimension of their identity and citizenship, in particular through education, culture and youth empowerment policies, in order to increase their feeling of belonging to the European project;

#### **Anchoring the EU's action locally to build a better future for our citizens**

6. Regions and cities are at the forefront of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, which should become the EU's over-arching long-term economic model, succeeding the Europe 2020 Strategy. Cities and regions should also be empowered to fully play their role in achieving the transition towards a carbon neutral and sustainable Europe;
7. The single market should be complemented by policies which guarantee the exercise of the single market's freedoms by everyone and guarantee fairness and social justice. The social dimension of the EU should be strengthened to allow social rights to be put on a par with economic rights. Successful European social inclusion policies and in particular the policies for integrating migrants are not possible if local and regional authorities are not provided with adequate means and direct access to appropriate EU funding;
8. Tackling the persistent economic, social and territorial disparities remains a major challenge for the future of the EU. Cohesion policy, notably through European territorial cooperation, has proven its added value for the EU and should be preserved beyond 2020 for all regions, based on the principles of a place-based approach, European partnerships, shared management and multilevel governance;
9. The level of public investment in the EU remains too low to provide the right public infrastructure and services. Closing the public investment gap is therefore crucial. The EU should allow necessary room for manoeuvre for local and regional authorities to support their investments;
10. EU leaders need to provide the European Union with an ambitious budget capable of withstanding the challenges ahead and enabling the design of lasting and sustainable EU policies. In a context of political, social and environmental urgency, we therefore call for a rapid agreement on the next multi-annual financial framework along the lines already set out by the European Parliament and the European Committee of the Regions.